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HISTORY  
OF THE WAR  
OF THE SICILIAN VESPER.

BY MICHELE AMARI.

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EDITED, WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES,

BY

THE EARL OF ELLESMERE.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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## PREFACE BY THE EDITOR.



THE work here presented to the English reader has taken its place among the classics of Italian literature. Any work of similar importance and equally established merit, whatever its subject, if it admits may be said to deserve translation ; but there are circumstances peculiar to the subject selected by Mr. Amari which claim an interest from English readers beyond and apart from the acknowledged merits of his composition in respect of style and execution. His history contains many incidental notices of the creation and progress of political institutions, presenting



analogies to those which in the progress of time have ripened into the British Constitution.

There are also circumstances connected with the affairs and condition of Sicily during the thirteenth century, anterior to the insurrection, which have a direct bearing on the development of the English Constitution. The lure of Sicilian dominion, held out by the Pope to Henry III. of England, led to financial embarrassments and consequent exactions, which not only incensed the clergy and armed the barons of England against arbitrary rule, but led to the representation of the commons. The Palatinate, ship-money, and Hampden of the reign of Charles I. were but repetitions, *mutatis mutandis*, of the Sicily, and forced subsidies and Simon de Montfort of that of Henry III.

When I heard that the task, of which the results are here presented to the public, had suggested itself to one whom I believed to be highly qualified for its execution, my best encouragement was not wanting to the under-

taking. I have not the good fortune to enjoy the personal acquaintance of Mr. Amari. The accidents of his life have made him a conspicuous member of a political school which would hardly admit me among its licentiates; but I have heard of him as one who amid stormy political events had obtained a distinction honourable to his character and fatal to his fortunes. I conceive that I cannot better render the humble service I desire to afford this publication than by furnishing, from sources placed at my disposal by the kindness of a friend of Mr. Amari, not indeed a connected biography, but a few of those particulars of his life which led, in the year 1842, to his brilliant appearance in the world of letters as the author of the following history.

Michele Amari was born at a period to which we would fain believe that he, and some of the best of his countrymen, look back with some regret, when English influence, in the shape of

an English garrison, prevailed in Sicily. The circumstances of his family, believed to be connected with the noble House of the Counts Amari, were removed alike from the extremes of opulence and poverty. To the age of fifteen his education was conducted at home, principally under the diligent care of a father who had imbibed a strong admiration for the exploits, and an attachment to the political doctrines, of revolutionary France. The paternal fireside was frequented by friends of similar opinions, with whom the young Amari was encouraged to converse. Among these was the Professor of History, Domenico Scinà, who took a warm interest in the youth, assisted his studies, and directed his talents to that path of history in which the pupil was destined to surpass the master.

This tranquil course of instruction was interrupted, as we have observed, at the age of fifteen. His father found it expedient at this period to provide, as he trusted, a career for

his son, by placing him, or, to use M. Amari's own words, burying him in the employment of public office. The English, meanwhile, had been succeeded by less palatable occupants in Palermo, and the father, while he endeavoured to secure the fortunes of his son, blasted his own by entering into a conspiracy, for the expulsion of the Austrians. He was condemned to death, but that sentence, executed on seven of his associates, was commuted in his case for an award of thirty years' imprisonment. Amari in his sixteenth year was thus left to support a mother, two younger brothers, and two sisters, on the pay of a subordinate *employé* in a Sicilian government office.

It would appear at least that the sins of the father were not visited on the son, to the extent of depriving the latter of this scanty resource. It is not surprising that a young man in this position should have considered this negative act of tolerance, however exceptional on the part of such a Government, as

entailing no strong obligation of future submission to its rule. His education had hitherto been strictly one of the mind, and bodily exercises had formed no part of it. This defect he now devoted all his leisure hours to repair. By pursuing such sports of the chase as the mountains of Sicily afford, by learning to ride, &c., he endeavoured to accomplish himself for guerilla achievements in a contingent war of independence. He became idle, savage, forgot his English and his Latin, read no book but Machiavel, and passed six years in this state of moody and wilful negligence of the talents he must have felt the while calling him to better things. In a fortunate hour for literature the inward monitor was assisted by a pressure from without, in that best of shapes, an honourable attachment. The object of this attachment was of a family addicted to English literature. Amari resumed his English studies, and in the course of their pursuit executed a version of "Marmion," which by the advice and commendation of



friends he published at Palermo in 1832. The great author of the original was about this time at Naples, and on receiving a copy of the work from Amari, acknowledged the attention in the following letter, "*graziosa e bizzarra*," as Amari terms it.

"SIR,—I was to-day fortunate enough to discover a mode of returning my best thanks to you for having taken the trouble to execute a very pretty translation, if my recollection be accurate, of the poem of Marmion. I must, however, confess that I have not seen the original for nearly twenty years. You are therefore fully entitled to all the thanks which a man should owe you to whom you should introduce your famous self, and prove to your own satisfaction that you are better worth being acquainted with than you had supposed yourself.

"I am afraid I dare hardly hope for you the popularity which with less merit I had the

good fortune to gain; but as the success of the sale is always an agreeable consequence of popularity, I hope with all my heart that the proof of it may reach you in this matter. And I am,

“ With great respect,

“ Dear Mr. Amari,

“ Your obliged humble Servant,

“ WALTER SCOTT.

“ Chevalier et Baronet. [*sic*] Palazzo Carmanica. 1st ~~Mo~~ [*sic*] February [it should have been April], 1832.”

The publication also obtained for Amari the friendship of an English man of letters, Mr. Thomas Stewart, who had taken monastic vows in a Sicilian convent. Amari's second publication was a version of an elegy by this gentleman on the ruins of Syracuse.

The revolution in France of 1830, recalled Amari's attention to politics. His suit had been rejected by the family of the lady, and he sought consolation in study. His lost

Latin was recovered, and without prejudice to Dante and Ariosto, history and moral philosophy were diligently pursued. In a political work of the day, published at Naples, the doctrine was maintained that Sicily had always been a dependency of the Neapolitan state. Amari's friends incited him to undertake the refutation of this, and an article was the result, which he published in a magazine at Palermo. Its success encouraged the author to undertake a history of Sicily from the commencement of the Bourbon dynasty. In the year 1836 some advance had been made in this work, when he suddenly abandoned it for the subject of the famous Vespers.

Amari had indeed detected obvious and insurmountable objections to his previous choice of a subject. The point of greatest interest in the picture was too near to the painter's eye. The events of 1812 could neither be traced out with accuracy nor treated with freedom. The subject now selected, on the other hand, was pregnant with the lessons



which Amari wished to convey, and which, deduced from so remote a source, might, as he hoped, escape the vigilance of the Sicilian censorship of the press. The political, and to say the truth, revolutionary stimulus which led to the undertaking, became however subordinate in its progress to those feelings which should animate the professed searcher and expounder of historic truth. The work, commenced as a pamphlet, became a history, and instead of enjoying a brief circulation over the counter of some Sicilian Ridgway, took its place as a *κτῆμα ἐς αἰ* on the shelves of the libraries of Europe.

In the year 1837, while Amari was busied with the Vespers, the cholera descended upon Sicily with a violence scarcely paralleled. The office to which he was attached had charge of the sanitary measures for the city of Palermo, and death and desertion left him nearly alone in the discharge of those duties, at a moment when from two to three thousand deaths were daily occurring in that

city. Meanwhile, however, his political opinions had become as notorious as his official services. The latter remained without reward; for the former he was deprived of promotion, ordered to Naples, and transferred from the department of internal affairs and public instruction to that of justice, so called, a department with the very nomenclature of which he was unacquainted.

At Naples he finished his Vespers, and having obtained leave to return to his family in Palermo, published them in April 1842. In October, the Government had become enlightened as to certain resemblances between ancient and modern events and characters, which Amari's volume had not failed to suggest to many of its readers. A family likeness, and something more, was traced between Charles of Anjou and Ferdinand the Second. These interpretations became known to the Government. The book was prohibited. The censors who had neglected to stop it in the press were turned out of

office. The Sicilian publisher, condemned on a false charge of clandestine printing, was exiled to the island of Ponza, where he shortly died; five journals which had noticed the work were suppressed. The author was summoned to Naples *to be interrogated*. His friends, and he himself, foresaw the result of a catechism conducted by Del Carretto, who considered himself as having sate for the portrait of William l'Estendard, and under direction of the sovereign, who had equal reason to suspect that he was aimed at in the delineation of Charles of Anjou. Amari embarked not for Naples, but for France.

At Paris he betook himself with ardour to the prosecution of his historical studies, and found a new and interesting field in the Mussulman occupation of Sicily. For the cultivation of this he encountered and mastered the gigantic difficulty of attaining the Arabic language. Paris afforded ample materials for investigation in this department, but Amari extended his researches to the MSS.

and other collections of London, Oxford, and Leyden. Three volumes of fragments, historical, geographical, and biographical, of upwards of a hundred Arabo-Sicilian writers in prose and verse, had been collected, and were in process of arrangement and digestion, when the revolution of 1848 broke out, and called him to the turmoil of arms and politics in Sicily. He was unable to reach Palermo before the 2d of March, a moment when, the actual conflict having been decided in favour of the Sicilians, administrators were more required than soldiers. In the former capacity, Amari, however ready to serve in the latter, was received with acclamation. He had been named before his arrival Professor of Jurisprudence in the University of Palermo. He now became member of the Committee of revolution, was elected deputy for Palermo to the Parliament by a few votes less than those given for his colleague Ruggiero Settimo, and finally appointed Minister of Finance; an office from which in revolutionary times men



do not always retire as poor as they take it, and as Amari was, and still remains. He refused even the official salary, lived at his own expense at the house of a brother, and endured, in his own words, a martyrdom of five months between two classes of his countrymen, those who demanded to live on taxes in the shape of salaried employment, and those who refused to pay them. Amari has not informed us which class was in the majority. In August, 1848, he exchanged this form of martyrdom for that of a mission to France, on which he was conveyed in the British steamer "Porcupine," furnished for that purpose by Admiral Parker. He found the French Government cold, and the hands of the more benevolent English Minister tied, as he says, by the Tories. Hostilities having been resumed in Sicily, he returned to take his share in them. He reached Palermo on the 14th of April, and found the Parliament discussing the necessity of negotiation in consequence of the recent fall of Catania. Hope-

less of utility or success, he re-embarked, on the 22d, on board the "Odin," which conveyed him to Malta. After a narrow escape from the shipwreck of a French steamer, he once more reached Paris, and resumed his Arabic investigations.

This sketch may suffice as a rough outline of the course of events and circumstances, which have had for their present result the history here presented to the reader, and other works which might be enumerated, and which promise a further, and even richer harvest. Amari is yet in the prime of intellectual life. I trust the time is distant when that task of biography, which to be complete must be posthumous, shall in his respect devolve on some one more fitted to do it justice than myself. Men will judge of Amari's politics by the standard of their own opinions. Those who think that insurrection against prescriptive authority requires excuse, should not condemn him till they have well considered the past and present state of his country, and the

character of the government and the institutions from which he endeavoured to withdraw it. Apart from these considerations, into which I do not enter, I believe that no character has emerged more pure from the furnace of continental politics than that of Amari.

Many who have not read his work may have heard of it as one in which its author has laboured to refute a long-established and popular version of the overthrow of French dominion in Sicily. I know not whether the notoriety of this feature of the work may not generate distaste or distrust in the minds of some readers. Those who have sighed as the remorseless hand of Niebuhr plucked up by the roots the legends long believed and cherished of early Rome, may not behold without a pang the Sicilian insurrection stripped of its least probable, but most fascinating features. The travels and toils of John of Procida; the dark design prosecuted for years, communicated to so many, betrayed by none; the king mustering his forces, and

dissembling their destination; the simultaneous rising at the preconcerted signal of the Vesper-bell, which has given a name to the transaction; —all these are incidents familiar to the ear, and pleasant to the imagination, but which the writer or student of history must henceforth submit to disbelieve, and which can at best retain their place in the repertory of the stage, or the pages of romance.

It should be remembered that the subversion of French dominion in Sicily was an event of no merely local or temporary influence. No slight service is rendered to the cause of truth by the man who rescues such a passage from the domain of fiction, and purifies the record from a mass of fable and exaggeration. There are other passages of history famous from their obscurity rather than for their importance, in which, as compared to this, little would be gained by lifting the veil of mystery which envelopes them. The abortive conspiracy of Venice has been the ground of a controversy between two eminent historians, Daru and



Ränke, very amusing to their readers. It is, however, a matter rather of curiosity than historical importance, to identify the victims whose bodies were seen one morning swinging from the gibbets of Venice, or to trace out the history of the attempt for which they perished. It is pretty certain that they died in no cause and for no object which entitled them to regret, or to that vindication which history owes to the martyr or the patriot. Their attempt not only failed, but left no signal consequence behind.

The successful insurrection of Sicily printed its traces, many and lasting, in the pages of the history of Christendom. It permanently affected the relations and the policy of many Christian powers. It diverted their attention and their arms from enterprises of aggression or defence against the common enemy, the Mahometan. It gave a shock to the Papal See and Papal system, which prepared the way for the Reformation. To substitute for a popular but unfounded version of any leading circum

stances of such a transaction, a sound and faithful exposition of the facts, is a task worthy of an honest and able inquirer.

This has been a main and preliminary function of Amari, and no one, as far as I am aware, since the publication of his *Researches*, has questioned the success with which he has discharged it. Those who having followed his reasoning, adopt his conclusions, may indeed be surprised that the task of establishing them was left so long unaccomplished. The improbabilities of the current version were glaring, and the materials for their correction neither scanty nor inaccessible. It cannot indeed be said with truth, that Amari has been the first to suspect, or to notice the nature and extent of the falsification of facts which had gained such general and popular acceptance. Voltaire and Gibbon had expressed their doubts. Sismondi attributes more to the exertions of John of Procida than Amari will admit, but agrees with

the latter in other points of importance. Brequigny, Koch, and others, repudiate the conspiracy, and the simultaneous massacre. Amari has, however, done what these and all others had neglected to do—he has sifted and compared extant authorities, and has succeeded not only in eliminating the fictions and improbabilities from the tale, but in accounting for their introduction, and their prescriptive possession of the public credence. He has traced the falsification to its probable sources in national vanity, and in the interests and inclinations of parties on both sides. He has shown that it suited Charles of Anjou, and his countrymen and adherents, to ascribe their ignominious defeat to a subtle and deeply-laid conspiracy; that it equally suited, on the other hand, Peter of Aragon and John of Procida to take the credit for mature design claimed for them by the popular writers; but in no instance, as Amari shows in his Appendix, by the sober and credible historians or chro-

niclers of the time. Such at least is the conclusion to which Amari has been led by a process of research, as painstaking and conscientious as ever was conducted by an honest and accomplished investigator.

EGERTON ELLESMERE.

OCT. 24, 1850.



## TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.



WHILE studiously endeavouring to give a faithful interpretation of the text, and preserving, in justice to the Author, all the numerous references which not only attest the diligence of his historical research, but challenge inquiry into the accuracy and impartiality of his statements, I have taken the liberty of curtailing the Preface, and omitting such of the Notes and appended Documents as appeared to me neither requisite for the elucidation of the text, nor of any interest to the general reader, leaving it to the learned to seek in the work itself more extensive information, and



pleasure far exceeding that which can be derived from any efforts of a translator, who acknowledges with regret an utter inability to do justice to the conciseness, vigour, and eloquence which distinguish the Original.

My inducement to undertake this translation is to be found partly in the merits of the work itself, first pointed out to me by the accomplished Editor; partly in the belief that a detailed narrative of this ancient Sicilian Revolution would not be without interest at a period when a new outbreak, of which the liberty gloriously conquered in 1282 was the pretext, has turned the eyes of all Europe on the Sicilies. Between the two events the analogy is slight indeed; yet the recent rebellion has served to show that the Sicilians still retain the fierce and ungovernable turbulence which marked their character in earlier times. Let us hope, therefore, that if called forth in support of a worthy cause, they would again exhibit the dauntless valour which in the thirteenth century could rival the endur-

ance of Spain, and quell the chivalry of France.

Under the auspices of a name alike eminent in literature and in criticism, I venture with diffidence to offer the following work to the indulgence of the public.

LONDON,

*Oct. 24th, 1850.*





## PREFACE.



THIS work was undertaken by me as a specimen of those detached portions of history which are best suited to the taste of our times, and I selected the Sicilian Vespers for my subject as the most important event of Sicilian history in the middle ages, which it would be incorrect to designate as an outbreak of municipal feeling, firstly, because Sicily is somewhat large to be regarded as a municipality; and secondly, because the love of country, grief for its wrongs, and an anxious desire for its prosperity, however modified by circumstances, is not to be confounded with the municipal egoism, at one time the bane of Italy—a fatal passion, now I trust for ever laid to

rest, together with the ambition of the various Italian nations to tyrannize over each other. On taking a nearer view of the Sicilian Vespers, they appeared to me in a nobler light, the traces of treachery and conspiracy faded away, and the massacre appeared as the commencement, not the end and aim of the revolution ; I perceived the importance of the reform effected in the regulations of the State ; of the social and moral force called into being by the revolution ; of the distinguished men whom it sent forth to combat and negotiate for twenty years. I saw the effects of the Vespers extending to other countries, and perpetuating themselves in Sicily ; perhaps also in the rest of Italy. This was enough to awaken in me the zeal for historic truth, and I felt that I could guard myself from being misled by my feelings in the examination of facts, even while making no effort to conceal them.

John of Procida, from mixed motives of patriotism and of private vengeance, purposes to take Sicily from Charles of Anjou ; he offers it to Peter of Aragon, who claims it in right of his wife ; he conspires with Peter, with the Pope, with the Emperor of Constantinople, and with

the Sicilian Barons ; when everything is in readiness, the conspirators give the signal ; the French are massacred, and Peter raised to the Sicilian throne. Such, with a few additional details, has hitherto been the history of the Sicilian Vespers, always terminating either with the Vespers themselves, or, at most, with the change of dynasty to which they led. A few modern historians, indeed, and those for the most part foreigners, have questioned the existence of a conspiracy so vast, so secret, and so successful ; but the extensive periods of history embraced by them prevented their pausing to analyze the facts, and thus the belief supported by all other, and especially native historians, still prevailed ; and the plot continued to be regarded as the ground-work of the story.

Now I think I have succeeded in proving that the Vespers were not the result of any conspiracy, but rather an outbreak occasioned by the insolence of the ruling party, and owing its origin and its important results to the social and political condition of a people neither used, nor inclined, to endure a foreign and tyrannical yoke ; and this view is undoubtedly confirmed by new documents

which throw light upon the causes of the revolution,—the letter of Charles himself, that of the Sicilians, and several inedited Papal Bulls. It was to her people, not to her nobles, that Sicily owed the revolution which, in the thirteenth century, saved her from the extreme of misery and degradation, from servile corruption, and from sinking into insignificance. It was to the Sicilian Vespers that the kingdom of Naples owed a reform in its government, which mitigated for a time the evils it had to endure, but had not strength to take lasting root. The Vespers saved Italy from many a fierce struggle with the Angevin dynasty, strong enough to trouble the Peninsula, but not to unite it under one sceptre ; and, as a sad counterpoise, the Vespers opened the way to Spanish dominion in Italy. They turned the current of events in the East, by disarming the ambition of Charles ; and they had well-nigh changed the fate of Western Europe by giving rise to the first war of conquest attempted by France against the Spanish peninsula. But leaving the external consequences of the revolt of a nation, which now amounts to two million souls, and in the thirteenth century did

not probably reach half that number—and confining ourselves to the effects produced upon Sicily herself, we shall find them to be most important; for the revolution, which changed first the form of government, then the dynasty, and finally the person of the sovereign, remaining unshaken and victorious to the end of the struggle, bequeathed to succeeding ages, amidst many inevitable evils, two lasting benefits—a glorious tradition, and political franchises which greatly restricted the regal authority.

That tradition, and those franchises, led to a century of feudal anarchy; to three of Spanish rule; and have lasted through the whole of the eighteenth, and great part of the nineteenth century. Nor can any one accuse me of instancing what would be now called liberal examples, in speaking of Charles V. and Philip II., nor of drawing from invalid or suspicious sources when I quote the German Professor Ranke, and his reflections on Osmanlis and the Spanish monarchy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Yet this work describes the obstinate resistance of the Sicilian nation to the regal authority, in the time of those harsh and despotic princes; and the

difficulty which they had in obtaining a scanty subsidy from the Sicilian Parliament, while the kingdom of Naples, Lombardy, the Netherlands, Castile herself, in short the whole of the monarchy beginning with Aragon, was oppressed by the weight of the taxes and the unaccustomed severity of the government. Our political franchises continued in force under Charles III., when Naples and Sicily separated themselves from Spain ; they were changed indeed in form, but certainly not in substance, in 1812 ; and it is curious to observe that, in 1815, the Congress of Vienna, confounding all minor distinctions, and retrenching and curtailing the political rights of Sicily, as of every other Italian State, yet did not presume altogether to annul them.

The statutes of the 8th and 11th December, 1816, dictated, as they were in the case of Sicily, by the executive alone, without any intervention of the legislative power, did indeed unite the two kingdoms of Naples and Sicily more closely than in the days of Charles III., and did away in practice with the constitutional or representative form which had existed in Sicily ever since the eleventh century, without interruption ; but still some ves-

tiges of the ancient purple were woven into the web of the new fabric, as it was impossible to avoid the retention of a few remaining privileges in the judicial and administrative regulations of Sicily; amongst which must surely be reckoned the promise distinctly given in the statute of the 11th December, that the king should convoke the Sicilian Parliament if he had occasion to increase the public imposts beyond the amount decreed in the last Parliament.

Thus the effects of that great popular movement of the thirteenth century may be traced, though gradually subsiding, through five centuries and a half, not only in the laws, but even in the practical administration of the government of Sicily. Those effects might be discerned in the dispositions of the Sicilians of the present day, if the natural and social causes which affect the manners of a people were as easy of analysis as their institutions. But in such an investigation the effects of the Vespers must necessarily be confounded with the temperament that caused them, of which all may detect the lineaments in the present generation; and it is perhaps because I am myself a native of Sicily and of Palermo,



that I have been able better than others to comprehend how the Revolution of 1282, desired but not preconcerted—executed as soon as planned, burst forth at once, sudden, general, and irresistible.

PARIS, *April* 1843.

THE  
WAR OF THE SICILIAN VESPER.

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CHAPTER I.

INTENTION OF THE WORK.—SOCIAL CONDITION IN THE THIRTEENTH CENTURY.—POWER OF THE CHURCH AND OF THE COURT OF ROME.  
—STATE OF ITALY AND OF THE KINGDOMS OF SICILY AND NAPLES UP TO THE MIDDLE OF THE CENTURY.—FREDERICK II. EMPEROR, AND INNOCENT IV. POPE.

THE reputation of strength, that most effectual bulwark of a state, is of all things the most variable. Often when the commonwealth appears hopelessly lost, it suddenly recovers itself either by the individual talents of a prince, or by the innate energies of a people. This impulse is followed up by glorious achievements in the council and in the field, by the rapid development of national power, the rupture of the hateful bonds of foreign servitude, the reform of the vitiated machinery of the state, and its consolidation by salutary ameliorations. Such passages constitute the real glory of nations, and should be constantly

kept before their eyes to reinvigorate the courage of the fearful and the desponding. Apart from these, what does history reveal to us but partiality, inefficiency, or avarice, in the administration of the laws; unjust war; hollow peace; sedition; tyranny; the dominion of the daring few over the suffering many, and the sacrifice of public good to private interest? From these too many lessons might be drawn, but of a nature rather to encourage inactive and bitter despondency than to stimulate patriotic virtue.

It is for this reason that I—a Sicilian—have undertaken to relate the change of dominion which occurred in Sicily towards the close of the thirteenth century. Leaving the contemplation of remoter times in which religion, language, manners, and all other branches of civilization were as yet unformed, I perceive the period from 1282 to 1302 to have been that of the greatest glory of Sicily; and the twenty previous years to have been marked by tyranny so excessive that its equal has rarely been known: nor do I think that any writer has hitherto either embraced the whole of this period separately, or minutely investigated and adequately described its details. I will make

every effort to supply this deficiency, though without presuming upon full success; and in so doing will conceal none of my emotions whether of admiration or resentment, convinced that it is vain for a man to attempt to divest himself of human feelings while recording the deeds of his fellow-men; but I will keep a strict watch over myself that they may not lead me involuntarily to distort the facts of my history; I do not say to falsify them, which would be either folly or malignity, according to the intention, and in either case injustice towards my country, of which the virtues, errors, and crimes should be recorded with equal candour, as well as the good and evil days of the nations who for a time were its rulers. I know that in writing of remote times, one is often tempted (as has been aptly remarked) to assume the character of a Diviner of the Past; but I will endeavour to allow as little play as possible to my imagination; and in order that both facts, and, where these are wanting, inductions, may rest upon a solid basis, I will only accept the former on the authority of contemporary writers or official documents; and where I meet with contradictory statements I shall adhere

to those which are supported by the soundest evidence, either external or internal.

In recalling attention to the past, I will not dwell upon matters so familiar to all, as the feudal system by which Europe was fettered, its attendant evils, and the tendency to change which marked the thirteenth century. The manners of the time were such as necessarily arose from civil powers fluctuating, and scattered, rather than divided; from extreme inequality of rights and possessions; ignorance almost universal; a corrupted religion, impotent laws, habitual violence, and compulsory fraud; nor were they yet affected by doubtful and tardy attempts at reform. That in the manners and customs of a people there should be a mixture of good and evil is a law of human nature, and although the proportions may be modified by example and legislation, neither of the elements can ever be entirely destroyed; but in those days the preponderance of evil would seem to have been greater than that of which our age can be accused. And it is at least certain, that, in the midst of barbarism, when men were less restrained by the trammels of outward forms which fetter us at every step both in social and domestic

life, great passions, whether good or evil, developed themselves more freely, and produced effects of greater magnitude.

In such a state of society, amidst political weakness and division, the power of the priesthood reaping the fruit of the docile piety of the apostolic times, of the fervour of the first Crusades, and of the long ignorance of the people, had attained a gigantic height. In the middle ages the Christian religion was the only source of light and comfort to the good, and was acknowledged even by the wicked, who trampled upon it in practice, while, by a sort of half-measure, they honoured it in their faith and in their worship, thus silencing the terrors of their blinded consciences. The priests consequently increased in estimation and in wealth; and the more so that they had the advantage of the laity in the light of science, and made a dexterous use of both the keys; while they not unfrequently defiled the purity of the Gospel with superstitions adapted to a barbarous age. The nobles enriched them in order to strengthen themselves by their influence, and the defenceless people clung to them in the hope of protection; which they did in fact afford. But it was the Court

of Rome above all which served to consolidate this unlimited power ; for having secured undisputed supremacy over the Western Churches, by a policy at once wise and daring, she exercised in dealing with kingdoms and nations all the arts employed by them in a more limited field. Amidst the convulsions of empires she steadily pursued her course, passing from the field of doctrine and morals to that of secular politics ; and thus in consequence of the mutual support afforded to each other by the Pope and clergy, the latter increased throughout all Europe in power and arrogance, like the legions of a resistless power ; while the former, the leader of these invincible armies, exalted himself above every sovereign of the earth.

Notwithstanding this there arose, in the thirteenth century, a strong opposition to the Court of Rome ; new desires were beginning to awake ; attention was directed to every branch of human knowledge ; the literature and doctrines of the ancients were ransacked to increase the treasures of the learned, who, though few at first, and fewest in those countries where liberty was least enjoyed, still everywhere rekindled the sacred flame. The more daring intellects rose to the



contemplation of the union of the temporal and spiritual power, and of the manners of the clergy, and the awakened jealousy of the rulers served to incite them still further. Those who had been most accustomed to the severities of the Court of Rome ventured to confront it; the irritated flock turned with insults upon the shepherd; the frequency of anathemas diminished their effect; men thought and spoke boldly upon matters formerly held sacred as faith itself. Thus arose the ideas which Dante thundered forth, slowly working their way through the inert masses of the people, till they at length struck root, and bore bitter fruit to the Court of Rome.

But in the times of which I write, these opinions, restricted to a few, although occasionally coming into collision with her authority, had not as yet weakened her power. While the ambition of the clergy passed all bounds, and cupidity, simony, and sensuality were rampant in the vineyard of the Lord, the people trembled before the priesthood; the successor of St. Peter extended his hand over sovereigns and their realms; and if occasionally brute force triumphed over moral supremacy, the power of opinion soon replaced

the Pontiff on a higher pinnacle than ever. In the trans-alpine regions we behold him raising the regal or popular banner at his will, causing wars to break forth or to cease, accumulating treasure, checking tyrannical power, bestowing crowns, or hurling them to the dust—more venerable and terrible as he was more remote; while in Italy, dragged into the vortex of civil contests, he combated even more strenuously, backed by the wealth of all Christendom; and called in foreign nations to aid his purposes, setting them in array against each other, and crushing to-morrow those whom he exalted to-day.

That beautiful country was already the object of fierce contention between the Church and the Empire. After its occupation by Charlemagne and the Othos, the greater part of Italy had remained subject to the feudal supremacy of the Emperors of the West; but these mighty men gave place to feeble successors; the turbulence of the great feudatories distracted the Empire; and the German dominion soon became, at best, merely nominal on this side of the Alps. Meanwhile the Church increased in power, and with the Scriptural doctrines of liberty and equality, encouraged

the Italians to throw off the yoke. Industry, commerce, science, and literature sprang up anew in Italy, to change the destinies of the world. Fostered by them, from the confused multitude of serfs, vassals, and lesser nobles, arose a new order—the people, sole basis of equal rights and civil freedom. Hence, when the feudal system changed into feudal anarchy, the latter, encountering this new order, gave rise, in the eleventh century, to the mercantile republics. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, the plains of Lombardy and Tuscany teemed with thriving and warlike cities, which, shaking off every yoke, adopted the municipal form of government, and the nobles became either citizens or captains of mercenary bands (*condottieri*), requiring, in their turn, the support of the towns, which had now acquired the preponderance. If here and there a city was governed by an absolute lord, or by an oligarchy, the system nevertheless was changed, and tended less to barbarism, because it no longer sprang from the servile necessity of vassalage, but from the errors or divisions of the citizens, who, while voluntarily submitting to the yoke, neither changed their customs nor forfeited the right to

enfranchise themselves. By this remodelling of the social system, warlike ardour was fostered, and municipal virtue encouraged; intellect was developed by the lofty conceptions of philosophy and political science, and an energy unknown to the stolid ferocity of the transalpine nations, circulated through the veins of the people of Italy, once the rulers of the world. Hence it was that the Emperors, at the head of their armies, eagerly striving to regain their lost dominion, were gallantly repelled, although the time was not yet ripe for those institutions which might have banished them for ever. The cause of this is to be found in the rapid growth of popular power. In other nations, where its development was gradual, it did not attain to maturity till many centuries later, when the monarchy, having broken the power of the nobles, had consolidated the union of the realm, so that the people, awakening from their lethargy, became animated by a strong national feeling. But in Italy it arose while provinces and cities were divided by feudal anarchy; and thus restricted within the limits of their own immediate territory, only municipal sentiments were engendered in their inhabitants—strong and

energetic feelings indeed, which prodigiously increased the power of individual cities, but which effectually prevented any lasting unity of government. Thus, if in one province a treaty was contracted for mutual protection and defence, it neither extended to the next, nor lasted beyond the immediate necessity which gave it birth. The various governments were unformed, uncertain, and unstable: here a city emancipated itself, there another fell anew under the yoke of an oppressive tyranny. Italy swarmed with hundreds of petty states, instinct with life, with passions, with suspicions, and with enmities, and thus ready to become the tools of loftier ambitions, which, finding scope amid their divisions, flourished only to increase them.

Rome, conscious of her strength, aspired to domination; now putting forward rights and cessions, now presenting herself as the champion of liberty; while the Emperors struggled as best they might for the reconquest of the fair and fertile garden of Italy. The sovereignty of Germany was at that time elective, and the king boastfully assumed the title of King of the Romans, as well as that of Emperor, when he could

obtain it from the Pope, who arrogated to himself the right of bestowing the imperial crown ; but the authority claimed under the glorious name of the Cæsars was mutilated and contested. The principal power in Germany was divided between the great feudatories and the free cities, all equally refractory, proud, and jealous of their rights ; so that the efforts of the Emperors to subdue Italy could be neither vigorous nor sustained, and rather resembled the enterprises of individual adventurers than the warfare of a great nation. Possibly the Germans, wearied and discouraged, might have abandoned the attempt, if Italy herself had not come to their assistance, owing to the curse of parties, whose names, to their increased shame, were borrowed from two German families. The Guelfs urged on and supported the unarmed Pontiff ; the Ghibelines, the foreign pretender ; they committed fearful havoc on each other, and with this they were content, careless alike of liberty or of servitude. And as if these two great divisions had not afforded sufficient outlet to their social passions, they varied them with other names and altered symbols, and identified them in the republics with the dif-

ferences of the noble and popular parties, till everywhere was confusion, strife, and bloodshed. Thus madly was corrupted the political energy and virtue which was the glory of Italy, and thus did she prepare for herself ages (and who can say how many?) of bondage without tranquillity.

Sicily, and the peninsula south of the Garigliano, though differing little from the rest of Italy in race, language, traditions, and manners, were subjected to a different form of government. While, in the rest of Europe, the northern races, losing the virtues of barbarism, retained only its vices, Sicily, like Spain, was under the dominion of the Saracens, who, if not civilized, were enlightened, and full of the activity and energy of a recently regenerated people. The mainland province, now invaded by the barbarians, now reconquered by the Greek Emperors, split itself into a multitude of states, under various politics. Some of them were adopting the forms of the rising Italian republics, when a handful of Norman adventurers, summoned as defenders, made themselves masters of the soil, and established the feudal system. Crossing into Sicily, towards the close of the eleventh century, they drove out the Saracens,



who were odious to the natives as foreign rulers differing from them in race and in religion, and founded there a new principality. They were the first to introduce feudality, which, as it was already beginning to decline in the rest of Europe, here arose in a more equitable and milder form, being further modified by the virtues and ability of Roger, the leader of the conquerors, by the influence of the great cities, by the powers grasped by the Church in the heat of Christian victory, by the amount of allodial lands, by the wealth and number of the Saracens, subdued rather than exterminated, and even by that of the Christian inhabitants of Sicily. Thus Count Roger, as ruler of a free people rather than chief of a turbulent baronage, and invested with the authority of pontifical legate (which is, even to the present day, an inherent privilege of the Sicilian crown), governed his new state firmly and orderly. It was raised to the rank of a kingdom by the second Roger, son of the Count, who, by combined force and policy, wrested Apulia and Calabria from the other Norman princes, and then gallantly defended them with Sicilian arms against the Barons who there enjoyed greater powers, the Emperor

and the Pope. Upon this he was hailed by the Parliament King of Sicily, Duke of Apulia and Calabria, and Prince of Capua; and at length, either of favour or necessity, recognised by the Pope. He centred the power of the magistracy in the crown, restrained the Barons, established wise internal regulations, revived industry, and employed his arms with success beyond the limits of his kingdom.

The newly founded Sicilian monarchy had two opposing powers to contend with; these were the Baronage, (which, although not sufficiently powerful to set at nought the regal authority, was yet daring enough to provoke it,) and the Court of Rome. The latter involved our princes in the contests of Italy, now calling them to her aid, and now laying claim to their provinces, and openly combating them. Nevertheless the monarchy, based on a firm foundation, resisted these assaults from within and from without, strengthened itself by improved laws under the reign of the second William, and might perhaps, after a long period of neutrality, have raised a true national standard in Italy, subdued the Emperor and the Pope, and occupied and protected the whole country to the foot of the Alps, had it not

passed, by marriage, from the Norman line, to the House of Suabia, which at that time wielded the sceptre of the empire<sup>1</sup>. Thus Sicily and Apulia assumed the ungrateful semblance of a Ghibeline power; and after the reign of the Emperor Henry, (which, from its brevity and atrocity, produced no lasting effects,) we see these two realms involved in the great Italian struggle. From the beginning to the middle of the thirteenth century, they were governed by the Emperor Frederick II., valiant in arms, noble and wise in council, the patron of Italian literature, and the constant enemy of Rome. Frederick restrained within due bounds the nobles who had usurped power during his minority; he called the Syndics of the towns to Parliament, though everywhere repressing republican tendencies; he took vigorous measures to reform the magistracy; and was the first sovereign in Europe to prohibit the trials by ordeal, impiously designated as the judgments of God; he dictated a code of laws, restoring or correcting those of the Normans; lastly he augmented the revenues of the state, and this to

<sup>1</sup> I have adopted this designation as the most habitual one, for the family of the Hohenstaufen, dukes of Suabia.

excess ; for his glory is tarnished by the severity and the rapacity of his government, ill excused by the pretended necessity of straining every nerve of the kingdom to the uttermost, that he might thence draw support for his foreign wars.

Thus, while the two potentates maintained a desperate contest by fraud and force, by the pen and by the sword, and, according to the varying fortunes of the struggle, appeared on the point of coming to terms, or reassumed the offensive more fiercely than ever, the most alarming dispositions were developing themselves in Sicily and Apulia, as is often the case when the ruler draws the bow too tightly in the delusive expectation that it will bend for ever. Innocent IV., a pontiff of lofty intellect, perceived this, and raised the cry of liberty not only in the cities of Upper Italy, but in Frederick's own dominions ; and after the middle of the thirteenth century aspired so triumphantly to victory, that calling a council at Lyons he proclaimed the deposition of his rival from the imperial throne, and hurled all the thunders of the Vatican against the magnanimous Suabian.

## CHAPTER II.

INNOCENT IV. PERSECUTES CONRAD, AND AT HIS DEATH OCCUPIES THE MAINLAND PROVINCES AND TROUBLES SICILY.—A REPUBLIC IN SICILY.—MANFRED RESTORES THE REGAL AUTHORITY AND FINALLY USURPS IT.—PRACTICES OF THE COURT OF ROME WITH FRANCE AND ENGLAND FOR HIS DESTRUCTION.—THE KINGDOMS GRANTED TO CHARLES, COUNT OF ANJOU.—ENTRANCE OF CHARLES INTO ITALY.—MANFRED DEFEATED AND SLAIN AT BENEVENTO.—CHARLES TAKES POSSESSION OF THE KINGDOM.—1251—1266.

At the death of Frederick, the Pontiff redoubled his efforts to root out the rival house of Suabia from Italy. Envy of its long retention of the Empire, and jealousy of the power it derived from the possession of Sicily and Apulia, backed by the arts of Rome, acted so powerfully in Germany, that Conrad, the son of Frederick, though elected King of the Romans, was excluded from the imperial throne; while, in order to deprive him of his southern dominions, Innocent again proclaimed liberty to the people; stirred up the barons; exhorted the bishops and clergy;

preached remission of sins to whoever should take up arms in the cause of Rome; and, in his briefs and by his legates, promised, to all orders and conditions of men, peace, and full enjoyment of every privilege under the protection of the Church, expedients to which he had before had recourse without success towards the close of Frederick's reign. The zeal of the Ghibelines of Italy, however, and the talents of the bastard Manfred,<sup>1</sup> no degenerate son of his imperial father, effected so much that Conrad, having subdued the enemies of his race, asserted his supremacy from the Garigliano to Lilibeo. He reigned but little more than two years, when he died, leaving an only child, an infant named Conrad, known in history by the childish diminutive of Conradin, because he met his doom when scarcely more than a child, after a career of momentary splendour. His father commended him, as an infant and an orphan, to the paternal kindness of the Pontiff, who renewed his assaults more furiously than ever, both by force and

<sup>1</sup> Manfred was a son of Frederick, by a lady of the noble family of Lancia, who, shortly before her death, was wedded by the emperor, then a widower. On this ground some pretended to legitimize the birth of Manfred.

artifice, upon the dominions of the young Conrad.<sup>1</sup>

The flame he sought to kindle found abundant fuel in the hatred of the House of Suabia, and with it of monarchy, engendered by the severity and rapacity, often even cruelty, of the government, and still further embittered by the contests which preceded Conrad's accession to the throne. The Barons were prone to rush into every excess, as much owing to the radical defects of the feudal system, as to the evil influence of foreign example. The greater cities endured the yoke with impatience, and aspired to the privileges enjoyed by the towns of Tuscany and Lombardy, for which

<sup>1</sup> While rapidly sketching in the preliminaries of my history, and relating only such facts as are known to all, I think it needless to multiply authorities; I will, therefore, until I reach the commencement of the Angevin dynasty, only quote them on matters of primary importance, such as this concerning the efforts of Pope Innocent to foment republican sentiments in Sicily and Apulia. These are deduced, not only from contemporary histories, but also from papal briefs, dated 24th April, 1246; 23d Jan. and 13th Dec. 1251; 18th Oct. and 2d Nov. 1254; quoted by Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* in the respective years, §§ 11—2, 3, 4—63, 64.

"Quod vobis sicut gentibus cæteris aliqua provenirent solatia libertatis:—universitas vestra in libertatis et quietis gaudio reforescat:—habitura perpetuam tranquillitatem et pacem, ac illam tutissimam et delectabilem libertatem qua cæteri speciales Ecclesiæ filii feliciter et firmiter sunt muniti:"—such and similar are the terms used by the Pope.



they had acquired a taste, partly from their frequent commercial intercourse with Upper Italy, partly from the consciousness that they too were strong in population and in substance, and enlightened by the arts and letters which flourished under Frederick. They were, moreover, accustomed to municipal regulations, relics of happier times, which had not been abrogated under the Romans, under the Empire, nor even perhaps under the Saracens; and as these regulations provided for nearly all the requirements of public affairs, there remained but a step between them and absolute political liberty. Wherever the power of the state is uncertain and vacillating, municipal authority will creep in to supply its deficiencies, as bearing the nearest resemblance to the natural and simple forms of social life; and being the less odious to the people, as inherent in themselves. Hence, during this period of confusion, the power of the municipalities increased, and with it the desire for liberty, which developed itself perhaps more strongly in Sicily than on the mainland, owing to the greater number of important cities, and the more limited power of the Barons.

Such was the condition of the country when Innocent unfurled the standard of the Church in 1254. He occupied Naples with his forces, and sent forth friars and orators to raise the people throughout the country. The king was an infant in Germany; the regent a foreigner, and of little capacity; Manfred, destitute of forces, or just claims to the crown; the kingdom, consequently, fell to pieces. All who found power within their reach, seized it in the name of the King, the Pope, or the Municipality—sometimes even without the sanction of any title. After a time the star of Manfred gradually appeared in the ascendant; he negotiated with the Pope, then appealed to arms; and when Innocent died at Naples, and was succeeded by Alexander IV., described by the Chronicle<sup>1</sup> as jovial, ruddy, corpulent, and inadequate to carry out the designs of his fiery predecessor, the wise and valiant Suabian resolutely undertook the reconquest of the realms. But as in Sicily anarchy had assumed the form of republicanism, and thus gave rise to the cry raised in the revolution of the Vespers, I will give

<sup>1</sup> Chron. Mon. S. Bertini, quoted by Martene and Durand. Thes. Nov. Anec. vol. iii. p. 732.

the particulars of his success as fully as the scanty memorials of the times will admit.

For many years Pietro Rosso, or Ruffo, had been viceroy of Sicily, and governor of Calabria. The Emperor Frederick had raised him from the condition of a menial to the highest honours—the usual reward in courts of the most adventurous and importunate. Conrad believed himself indebted to him for the fidelity of Sicily during the disturbances which followed the death of Frederick, and therefore bestowed on him the title of Count of Catanzaro, and permitted him to retain his jurisdiction; which so redoubled his arrogance, that he governed in the king's name for his own advantage, his wealth and influence rendering him powerful enough to dare openly to disobey his sovereign. After the death of Conrad the Count of Catanzaro was able to brave the first shock of the convulsions consequent upon it, and even to maintain a certain degree of authority, notwithstanding the universal tendency to republicanism, which he did not oppose, but wisely conciliated, feigning to labour for the interests of the people; nay more, amid the confusion he audaciously aspired to greater things,

and when Pope Innocent warmly urged the Sicilians to raise the banner of the Church, and held out to Messina the old bribe of promised privileges, the viceroy joined himself to the envoys of the Sicilian cities in negotiating with the Court of Rome; proposed and refused conditions; and sent his nephew to the Pope with the ambassadors of Messina, and the Bishop of Syracuse, intriguing secretly to have him invested with the kingdom of Sicily, to be held in fief from the Church upon payment of tribute. When Manfred, having triumphed at Lucera, summoned him to return to his former allegiance, the Count, glorying in these projects, refused to agree to anything beyond a federal treaty on terms of mutual reciprocity. He trusted to conduct his schemes in such a masterly manner as should enable him to employ the Suabian princes, the Pope, and the people against each other for the furtherance of his personal designs.

But as treachery has no warrant of success, he was unable long to cajole the Sicilian cities; he himself provoked a rupture with them; for wishing to shield himself under the semblance of legitimacy until his usurpation was matured, he

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coined money in the name of Conrad the Second, which was an open disavowal of the Republic. Upon this the cities, breaking off all intercourse with him, proclaimed a republic under the protection of the Church. Palermo was the first to set the example, then Patti, moved by her bishop, and many others followed in their train. The viceroy sent ambassadors to Palermo, who were repulsed; he saw the cities of Etna rise in a body, and with them Caltagirone, by which the neighbouring crown-lands were sacked and wasted; and no resource now remained to him but to try what force could effect. He therefore assembled an army of Messinese and such others as remained faithful to him, and assaulted Castro Giovanni, which still hesitated to declare itself, and which being irresolutely defended, he succeeded in taking. But that same day Nicosia threw off the yoke, and was soon imitated by several other cities; even the Messinese in his army began to assume a menacing aspect. One feeling pervaded all Sicily, which even the hateful municipal feuds were powerless to check. In such a posture of affairs a slight failure sufficed to complete the ruin of the Count of Catanzaro. He was repulsed in an

attack upon Aidone, whereupon his own troops compelled him to return to Messina, where finding that a conspiracy had broken out, he hastened to enter the town, in order to frustrate it. It was in vain that he imprisoned in the palace Leonardo Aldighieri,<sup>1</sup> and several other citizens whom he mistrusted above the rest; the people became furious, demanded the prisoners, and having obtained them, were not pacified, but carried Leonardo in triumph, proclaiming him Captain of the People, amid shouts of "Success to the Municipality! Down with the Viceroy!" They came to an agreement with Catanzaro, that, upon giving up to them some fortified places as security, he should be free to depart with his family and property: and thus vanished the last shadow of regal authority. After the departure of the Count the people plundered his houses; and he, contrary to the terms of the agreement, attempted to fortify himself in Calabria; but he was followed by the troops of Messina, and, moreover, encountered

<sup>1</sup> This is the same family name as that of Dante, who in the fourteenth century was called Aldigherius, as may be seen in the commentary of Benvenuto da Imola, but there is no mention made of Leonardo Aldighieri having been of the family of the Florentine poet.

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those of Manfred; and repelled, as he deserved, by both parties, he wandered about, destitute of council or support, until driven with shame to seek a refuge at the papal court.

Sicily, meanwhile, encountered no further obstacle to the accomplishment of her desires. Messina, sharing in the universal joy, proudly gave herself up to all the virtues and vices of the other Italian republics. She desired a foreign *Podesta*, and the first whom she raised to that office was a Roman named Jacopo da Ponte. Seized with a thirst for conquest she assaulted Taormina which refused obedience to her authority, levelled it with the ground, and caused her name to be feared in Calabria, where she occupied many towns. Palermo, stimulated by the same impulse, seized the castle of Cefalù, and doubtless also other intervening posts. And what is of greater moment, with a view to the adjustment of private affairs she sent one Jacopo Salla as orator to the Pope at Naples, to announce the proclamation by the whole island of a communal government, under the protection of the Church. The Pope immediately despatched as his vicar a Minorite friar, Ruffino of Placentia, who was

received with great honours, and greeted with popular rejoicings in Palermo, Messina, and all parts of the country. Wherever he appeared, citizens and priests, old men and children, came joyfully forth to meet him as the liberator of their country, strewing his path with palm and olive branches; and all exulted with joy and hope in the new order of things. Count William of Amico, Roger Fimetta, and other citizens who had been exiled ever since the time of the Emperor Frederick, for Guelf, or liberal opinions, were recalled. The cry of liberty was universal; the cities, townships, and villages bound themselves by mutual treaties, and the pontifical Vicar presided, in the name of the Church, over the confederation. This state of things in Sicily lasted for about two years, from 1254 to 1256. In Apulia and Calabria, meanwhile, power was more eagerly contended for by the rival princes, than liberty was desired by the people; partly because they were less inclined towards it there than in Sicily; partly because the Pope and Manfred, both near at hand, by turns compelled them to obedience.

This is all the information furnished by contem-



porary historians. Whether the young republics of Sicily were democratic or oligarchical we cannot tell; perhaps neither system was fully carried out. Perhaps, as formerly the citizens, assembled in council, deliberated upon the affairs of the municipality, of which the administration was confided to the magistrates, so now the same system might be extended to embrace all branches of the government. History takes no notice of the reciprocal bonds by which the cities were united—of the limits set to the authority of the Pope and the Legates, or of the communal councils which must have been associated with them. All that we have are documents of feudal cessions in Sicily from the Pope to the Barons who took part with him, which would rather appear to prove the confusion and usurpation of public power, than its exercise by just and established right. Neither does any historian inform us what was the fate of the feudataries; but we see some of them acceding willingly to the new order of things, others submitting in sullen silence and biding their time, which makes it manifest that the Sicilian Barons were already divided between the Guelf and Ghibeline parties. It was a state approaching to

anarchy, an imperfect league between powerful feudataries of opposite parties, and cities in which aristocratic and monarchical sentiments still maintained their ground, feebly held together in the name of the Church. Time might have consolidated the Sicilian commonwealth, as it did the other Italian republics, but monarchy speedily rose again and crushed it. In times of revolution men often expect to reap the fruit of a political innovation earlier than nature will yield it, and finding themselves disappointed, rush into the opposite extreme; individuals are divided by envy, and reaction again rears its head. This came to pass in Sicily. The power of Manfred increased on the mainland; the papal party failed—that of the Suabians triumphed; the great feudataries, whom their pride and their interest for the most part inclined towards the king, rose on his side; the republicans gave way in dismay, and so rapid was the overthrow, that a few years after Bartholomew of Neocastro designated this commonwealth as the “Republic of Vanity.”

Thus, while the army commanded by Frederick Lancia reduced the Calabrias to submission to the House of Suabia, another composed of the

great feudataries was gathering in Sicily, with which Henry Abbate entered Palermo, imprisoning the papal legate and the partisans of liberty. He then victoriously traversed the island, and at Lentini defeated Roger Fimetta, the principal defender of the Republic, or of the fiefs with which, on the strength of this reputation, Pope Alexander had liberally endowed him; but at Taormina Abbate met with a vigorous resistance, and the fortune of the contest would have been doubtful, but for the defeat experienced by the Messinese, in Calabria. The numerous army of horse and foot with which they were carrying on the war in that province, against the partisans of Manfred, was carelessly traversing the plain of Corona, after the sack of Seminara, when it was suddenly attacked by Lancia, and thus, placed between two hostile armies, was routed with great slaughter. This victory having given Lancia the dominion of the Calabrias, he proceeded to threaten Messina, and throughout the whole of Sicily to incite and encourage the royalist party. This obtaining the upper hand in Messina (where arms were wanting for the defence of the place), the Podesta, either from cowardice or necessity,

took to flight, the Suabian banner was hoisted, and the city surrendered itself to Lancia. The last to struggle for liberty were Piazza, Aidone, and Castro Giovanni, and they too were reduced to obedience.<sup>1</sup> Thus, Manfred subdued all the inhabitants of the mainland, and of Sicily, and governed, for a time, in the name of Conradin; but, unwilling to resign to a mere child the sceptre he had reconquered by his own valour, he promulgated the report of the death of his nephew in Germany; and whether his word were believed or no, he assumed the crown in Palermo, as sole heir of Frederick, on the 11th of August, 1258.

Manfred held the reins of government with a strong hand, and, finding conciliation impossible, combated the Court of Rome with desperate energy. He placed himself at the head of the Ghibeline party, which he revived in Lombardy, and fomented in Tuscany. He found partisans even in Rome, which was not yet subdued by

<sup>1</sup> The account of the republic of 1254 is drawn from Bart. de Neocastro, *Hist. Sic.* ch. 2, 4, 5, 47, 87. Saba Malaspina, in Caruso, *Bibl. Sic.* vol. i. pp. 726—736, 753; and in Muratori, *R. I. S.* vol. viii. Nic. di Jamsilla, in Muratori, *R. I. S.* vol. viii. Chronicle of Fra Corrado, in Caruso, *Bibl. Sic.* vol. i. date 1254 and 1255. Appendix to Malaterra, in Muratori, *R. I. S.* vol. v. p. 605. Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1254, §§ 63, 64; and 1256, §§ 30—32.

the Popes, and being governed by a senator, had recently elected to that office one Brancalone, a man of lofty spirit, who, from community of hatred, had allied himself to the Ghibeline king. The Court of Rome finding itself, under these circumstances, unequal to maintain the conflict, now hastened to put into execution a long-conceived design. So early as on the decease of Frederick II., Pope Innocent, conscious of the want of vigour in the pontifical arm to wield the sceptre of Sicily and Apulia, had turned his eyes to the west in search of some potentate who would conquer them with his own forces, and hold them with the title of king in fief from the Church, upon condition of paying her tribute both in money and in military service, by which means he would raise in Italy a powerful champion of the Church and head of the Guelf party. Thus, while proclaiming liberty to the people of southern Italy and Sicily, he bargained for them as for a flock of sheep; first, with Richard, Earl of Cornwall, brother of Henry III. of England; then with Charles, Count of Anjou and Provence, brother of Louis IX. of France; and finally, with the youthful Edmund, son of the aforesaid Henry.

The still existing epistles of the monarchs, and bulls of Innocent and of his successors, reveal, and confirm all these practices, carried on for sixteen years by the Court of Rome, with the utmost caution, unless when driven to precipitancy by fear or indignation. With unwearied zeal the Pope despatched briefs and legates to urge on the sovereigns—used every effort to win over their courtiers, and lavished the tithes of all Christendom to aid the conquest of Sicily and Apulia. To this end he published a crusade, and commuted for it the vows of princes and nations to take part in the holy war in Palestine. Often during these negotiations the Court of Rome, either from want of means, from the necessity of self-defence, or from impatience to occupy some of the provinces of Apulia, borrowed money upon the security of the property of the Transalpine Churches, and compelled their prelates to satisfy the claims of the creditors, threatening those who showed reluctance with the weight of its censures. Sometimes the Pope granted bulls of investiture in exchange for vast sums of money; sometimes his eagerness for the destruction of Manfred made him suspend these lucrative practices; and

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meanwhile the enterprise was postponed, as beyond the powers of those who meditated it, and rendered almost desperate by the strength and talents of Manfred.

Henry III., a monarch of small capacity, had violated the provisions of Magna Charta, and was therefore embroiled with the zealous defenders of English liberty; but, covetous of the possessions of others, he eagerly prepared to take part in this adventurous struggle. He made his conditions with the Pope, received the investiture for his son Edmund, and prepared his forces; but the arbitrary and imprudent acts to which he resorted, and the exactions of Rome, gave so much umbrage to his subjects, that the Parliament forced him to abandon the enterprise, and subsequently, calling to mind these and many other wrongs committed by him, deprived him of the crown, trampled him under foot, and involved the kingdom in destructive civil wars. The negotiations with France failed also from a widely different cause. There the people were submissive, and the king mild indeed, but not weak, high-minded, a restorer of the laws, a prudent moderator of the powers of the government, and withal of such rare

piety that after his death he was enrolled in the number of the saints. But the dominion of France was curtailed by foreign occupation in the west, and by the encroachments of the great feudatories in other quarters ; she had scarcely yet recovered from the bloody wounds inflicted on her by an ill-fated crusade ; but that which most powerfully restrained her from taking part in the Sicilian enterprise was the feeling of the king, who regarded with abhorrence the idea of waging war against Christians, or the invasion of another's rights. For this cause the upright monarch pertinaciously refused his concurrence ; and the Court of Rome hesitated long between him and the King of England, restrained by compulsion, not by conscience. When it beheld, however, the fall of Henry, and itself driven to extremity by the Ghibelines and Manfred, the Roman Court, as if urged to desperation, made use of every artifice to conquer the scruples of Lewis ; it addressed itself to Charles of Anjou and to his wife, who, as sister of three queens, would have given her life to take her place beside them<sup>1</sup> and wear a regal

<sup>1</sup> It is related that, on occasion of a festival at the French court, Beatrice, Countess of Provence, was driven from the dais



crown if only for a moment, holding out to their ambitious hearts the flattering assurance that every obstacle was now removed, saving only the obstinacy of Lewis. The Pope artfully won over to his side every person of influence at the French court. He pressed the king on his weakest point, and despatched letter after letter to admonish him not to harden his heart, and that henceforward it would be irreverence and presumption to refuse, or for a layman to have any scruples about taking part in an enterprise pronounced by the successor of the Apostles and by his cardinals to be just and honourable. He represented the Church uprooted from Italy by Manfred, a dissolute tyrant, and half Saracen; heresy flourishing and spreading; the sacred temples profaned; the bishops and priests subjected to violence; anathemas despised; and the road to the Holy Land closed, as long as

on which were seated her two younger sisters, the Queens of France and England. (The third, who was absent, was wife to Richard, Earl of Cornwall, King of the Romans.) She returned to her apartments indignant and in tears; Charles being informed of the cause of this feminine grief, kissed her lips, saying: "Countess, set your mind at ease, for I will soon make you a greater queen than they;" and this it was which powerfully urged him on to the conquest of Sicily.—Giovanni Villani, book vi. chap. 90; Florence ed. 1823. Ramondo Montaner, chap. 32. Chron. of Morea, book ii. p. 39; ed. Buchon, 1840.

Sicily should remain in rebellion against the Pontiff.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the King of France was persuaded to consent to the enterprise, and the conditions of the cession were negotiated, the Pope demanding amongst them the possession, not only of Benevento and Pontecorvo with their dependencies, but of almost all the region now comprised in the district of Naples, Pozzuoli, Caserta, Nola, Sora, and Gaeta, besides other cities and villages in various parts of the kingdom.<sup>2</sup> The demands of Rome having afterwards become more moderate,

<sup>1</sup> Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1253, and the following years. See also Hume's *History of England*, touching Henry III. ch. 12, in which he quotes Matthew Paris. Duchesne, *Hist. Franc. Script.* vol. v. pp. 869—873. Documents, showing the negotiations of the Popes for the bestowal of the kingdom on the above-named princes, may be found in Lünig, *Diplomatic Code of Italy, Naples and Sicily*, vol. ii. n. 30—42. Rymer's *Fœdera*, London ed. 1739, vol. i. p. 477 and the following.

<sup>2</sup> The terms of the treaty may be found in a bull of Urban IV. given at Orvieto, the 26th June, 1263; which contains very nearly the same terms as the bull of concession of Clement IV., except that the Pope demands, either the above-named fertile provinces, with a tribute of 2,000 ounces of gold, or else a tribute of 10,000 ounces for the whole kingdom, still reserving Benevento to himself. He afterwards consented to give the whole kingdom for 8,000 ounces a year. This bull will shortly be published by the learned M. Alex. Teulet, who extracted it from the archives of France, and kindly communicated it to me.

Charles accepted the terms, and the bargain was concluded with Urban IV., and in consequence of his death, was solemnly decreed by Clement IV. a Frenchman, immediately on his accession to the papal throne.

Urban and Clement both made it their study to follow up the ancient policy of the pontifical Court; that, namely, of converting into feudal supremacy, at least, the recognised right of affording counsel and protection in temporal affairs, which had almost strengthened into jurisdiction in several countries of Christendom; this it attempted first in England, then in Aragon, and with still more determined perseverance in the Italian provinces south of the Garigliano.

On the 25th of February, 1265, Clement promulgated the bull by which "the kingdom of Sicily, and all the territory extending from the Straits of Messina to the confines of the States of the Church, with the exception of Benevento," were ceded to Charles, to be held in fief from the Church, in consideration of an annual tribute of 8,000 ounces of gold, and military service when required. Many were the subtle conditions devised and dictated by the Pope to impede the

aggrandizement of the king (binding him to aspire neither to the empire, nor to the sovereignty of any other Italian state), for the security of Rome, which desired that he should be powerful, indeed, but not sufficiently so to domineer over herself. Besides this, he curtailed the rights of the sovereign in the election to bishoprics and other ecclesiastical benefices; deprived him of the revenues of vacant sees, and of all participation in ecclesiastical causes, appeals concerning which were to be exclusively directed to Rome; and confirmed the emancipation of the clergy from the jurisdiction of the ordinary tribunals and from the payment of tribute.

Amid these minute precautions for the preservation of his own power, Clement did not forget the inhabitants of the country of which, though not his own, he was thus disposing: and he stipulated for them the possession of all the privileges they had enjoyed under William II., the mildest, most just, and most sparing of the property of his subjects, of all the sovereigns recorded in Sicilian history.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Lüttig, *loc. cit.* n. 43. I here reproduce the summary of this bull, given in Perugia, the fourth day previous to the

And now all haste was made to prepare arms and forces for the war against Manfred. Eighteen years had elapsed since the defeat of the crusading army, and France was teeming with nobles,

calends of March, of the first year of Clement the Fourth's reign.

After a long discourse on the subject of the previous cession to Edmund of England, which is again repeated to be null and void, owing to the non-fulfilment of the conditions, and to the absence of any formal deed to that effect, the kingdom of Sicily, with all the territory between the Straits of Messina and the confines of the States of the Church, is given to Charles of Anjou, who must proceed to Rome to receive the investiture before the next festival of St. Peter; while the Cardinal Legate, sent to carry on the negotiation, would aid him with a subsidy taken from the ecclesiastical tithes of France, and would preach a crusade against Manfred.

The conditions of the cession are :—

1. Benevento shall belong to the Church.
2. Neither Charles, his family, nor his heirs, can have property or jurisdiction in any territory belonging to the Church of Rome.
3. Certain privileges are to be accorded to Benevento.
4. Order of succession, and lapse of the kingdoms to the Church in default of legitimate heirs of the house of Anjou.
5. A tribute of 8,000 ounces of gold annually to the Church, with excommunication and forfeiture of the kingdom in default of payment.
6. After the conquest of the kingdom, whether partial or complete, Charles is bound to pay 50,000 marks to the Church, in repayment of the expenses sustained by her.
7. Every three years he shall present a white palfrey to the Pope.
8. At the Church's need he is bound to furnish 300 men-at-arms (that is, from 900 to 1,200 horse) for three months every year. This may be commuted for a contingent of armed vessels.

knights, and men-at-arms, who, weary of the restraints of civil and social life, longed impatiently to find a field for their exertions, an opportunity of acquiring military glory, and amassing wealth. Soldiers of fortune hastened from Flanders with the same object; others were furnished by Provence, which in ancient times had formed a part of the kingdom of France, but had after-

9. The kings of Sicily and Apulia shall do homage to every Pope.

10. They shall not divide the territory. Here we find the formula of the oath of allegiance to be sworn to Rome.

11. They cannot be either emperors, kings of the Romans or of Germany, or lords in Lombardy or Tuscany.

12. If their heirs should be elected to any of these dignities, they must give them up.

13. The heiresses of the kingdom must not intermarry with princes of those countries.

14. An oath for the observance of the conditions contained in Article 12.

15. If the king should be elected emperor, he must emancipate his son, and make over the kingdom to him.

16. Similar conditions attaching to the female heirs of the throne.

17. The female heir to the throne must not marry without the consent of the Pope.

18. Bastards are excluded from the succession.

19. The kingdom is never to be united to any other Italian State, nor to the Empire.

20. Forfeiture and excommunication if the king should occupy any territories belonging to the Church.

21. The movable or immovable property taken from the churches, shall be restored under the inspection of papal commissaries.

22. Liberty

wards separated itself from it in the ninth century on the death of Charlemagne, and became a fief of the Empire; then, breaking its feeble bonds, was governed as an independent state by its own counts, and had now passed into the hands of Charles of Anjou by his marriage with Beatrice, the last of their line. That rigid tyranny, which

22. Liberty of ecclesiastical election, saving the royal patronage. All ecclesiastical causes shall be prosecuted in Rome.

23. Revocation of the Suabian statutes against ecclesiastical immunities.

24. Immunity of ecclesiastics from ordinary jurisdiction :

25. And from imposts.

26. The revenues of vacant sees shall belong to the Church.

27. Both feudataries and subjects shall retain the privileges and immunities enjoyed by them under William II.

28. The exiles shall be permitted to return at the pleasure of the Church.

29. Prohibition from joining any league against the Church.

30. Liberation of all imprisoned subjects of the Pope. Restitution of the estates of the Duke of Sora. Revocation of all cessions of fiefs, or other possessions, made by Frederick, Conrad, or Manfred.

31. Charles shall embark in the enterprise with an army of not less than 1,000 men-at-arms, (counting four horses for every man-at-arms,) 300 crossbow men, &c. &c.

32. He shall come within three months after the cession.

33. The above conditions shall be binding on his successors.

34. After the conquest is concluded he shall have the privilege of investiture with the golden bull.

35. He shall not retain the office of Senator of Rome for life :

36. But shall resign it in three years, and meanwhile shall employ its influence to the advantage of the Church, and shall dispose the people of Rome in her favour.

afterwards bathed Apulia in tears and Sicily in blood, was already rampant in Provence: Marseilles, Arles, and Avignon had been deprived of their republican franchises by fraud or by force; and partly through covetousness of the possessions of others, partly through fear of her tyrant, Provence flew to arms to obtain his aggrandizement. She was drained of her resources by Charles and Beatrice, the latter of whom even pawned her jewels; other supplies of money were furnished by King Lewis, or borrowed by the Count of Anjou from Henry of Castile, or from merchants and nobles.

Having thus gathered from all quarters the means of defraying the cost of the preparations, the warriors, whose object was gain, and the crusade their pretext, assembled under the adventurous banner of Anjou, some as mercenaries, some leading bands of followers at their own expense, like a stake in a speculation or a lottery, with the hope of a return in territorial possessions in the conquered kingdom. They amounted to thirty thousand, between horse and foot, and yet they are designated in history as an army, not as they were in truth, a band of freebooters, con-



gregated beyond the Alps, to pour down upon Italy, to slay for the sake of plunder, and then to assume the semblance of authority, and stigmatize resistance as rebellion.

After a perilous sea voyage, to avoid the formidable army of Manfred, Charles landed in Italy with a handful of followers ; and in June, 1265, he assumed for a time the office of Senator of Rome, by the consent of the Pope. In the autumn his forces crossed the Alps, meeting with no opposition from the Italian Ghibelines, some of whom were intimidated and others bought over. Thus fortune, which overthrows all human counsels at a breath, at this juncture forsook Manfred. The divisions of Italy were very injurious to him, as the prospect of innovation produced a revival of the Guelf party. The power of the Church was likewise against him ; but it was the fickleness of his Barons which wrought his ruin, together with the disaffection of the people caused by the frequency and weight of the imposts, the often repeated excommunications, and all the evils engendered by the struggle with Rome. Indignation against his enemies, and the necessity of securing

himself, had urged Manfred on during the whole of his reign ; he had not listened to the remonstrances of the people, remonstrances which are often for years despised and unheeded, till the hour at length arrives when death and destruction are their bitter fruit.

This hour now overtook the noble Manfred. He felt its approach, but resolved to show a bold front to fortune. Gathering an army of Germans and Italians, of as many Apulians as he believed faithful to his cause, and of the Saracens of Sicily, who had been removed to the mainland, and who, hated by all besides, clung to him alone, he used every exertion to strengthen his host, and to gain time from the enemy, to whom delay would have been destruction. The winter had set in with great severity ; Charles, together with his queen, had been crowned at the Vatican, on the 6th of January, 1266 ; and the want of means left him no alternative but to achieve the meditated conquest immediately, or to disband his forces. He therefore advanced precipitately, accompanied by a legate of the Pope, and aided by the Italian Guelfs, and first showed himself at Ceperano,

where cowardice or treachery opened for him the passage of the Garigliano,<sup>1</sup> delivered San Germano and Rocc' Arce into his hands after a trifling combat, and suffered him to cross the Volturno without striking a blow. Only at Benevento was there fighting, for Manfred was there, and Charles would listen to no conditions of peace. There the Germans and the Sicilian Saracens fought bravely; the rest fled, and after a fearful carnage the impetuosity of the French carried the day. Manfred thereupon rushed upon the ranks of the enemy to seek for death, nor did he seek it in vain. His corpse was found amongst the thousands of the slain, and over it the hostile soldiers raised a pile of stones; but even this humble sepulture was

<sup>1</sup> The facts of Charles's victory are drawn from Saba Malaspina, book iii. ch. 1; Ricordano Malespini, ch. 179, both quoted by Muratori, R. I. S. vol. viii., and from many other contemporary sources. See Muratori, *Annali d' Italia*, 1266, and the following passages in Dante:—

“A Ceperan, là dove fù bugiardo  
Ciascun Pugliese.”—*Inf.* c. 28.

“L' ossa del corpo mio sariano ancora  
In co' del ponte, presso a Benevento,  
Sotto la guardia della grave mora:  
Or le bagna la pioggia, e muove 'l vento  
Di fuor dal regno, quasi lungo 'l Verde,  
Ove le trasmutò a lume spento.”—*Purg.* c. 3.

denied him by the hatred of the pontifical legate, and for his last obsequies the remains of the Suabian hero were flung to the dogs on the banks of the Verde.

Naples applauded the conqueror ; rebellion, the defeat of the army, and the death of the king, caused the submission of the remainder of Apulia and Calabria, as well as of Sicily ; the gallant Saracens alone held out in Lucera. The treasures of the vanquished were hastily divided between Charles, Beatrice, and their knights ; the soldiers of fortune obtained lands and dignities, and the people, who in changing their rulers rarely change their destinies for the better, hoped as usual to reap benefit, deeming that peace would bring with it a diminution of the taxes imposed for the maintenance of the obstinate conflict with the Court of Rome.

## CHAPTER III.

THE VICTORY OF CHARLES GIVES ASCENDANCY TO THE GUELF PARTY IN ITALY.—THE Ghibelines rise again and invite CONRADIN TO THE RECONQUEST OF THE KINGDOM.—SICILY REVOLTS IN HIS FAVOUR.—HE IS DEFEATED AT TAGLIACOZZO, AND BEHEADED AT NAPLES.—CHARLES CRUSHES THE REVOLUTION IN TERRA FERMA BY SEVERITY, IN SICILY BY INHUMAN CRUELTY.—MASSACRE OF AGOSTA.—1266—1268.

THE appearance of Charles had aroused the Guelfs who had aided him in the campaign, and now, as participators of his victory and strengthened by his fame and by his arms, they assumed the upper hand throughout the whole of Italy, and, the imperial throne being vacant, Pope Clement, though without authority to do so, bestowed upon the king the title of Vicar General of the Empire in Tuscany, in order to open a wider field to his ambition. Thus the supreme authority in all the Italian provinces changed hands in favour of the Guelfs, Siena and Pisa alone remaining to the Ghibelines. The rest of the adherents of this party, taken by surprise rather than subdued,

abandoned the field to their opponents, some going forth as exiles, some sitting down quietly in their own homes, but all brooding over thoughts of hatred and vengeance in their hearts. Hence they turned their eyes in the direction of Germany, upon the young Conradin, already past the age of childhood and rightful lord of Sicily and Apulia, the influence of which states, as it now turned the scale in favour of the Guelfs, would, if restored to the Suabian dynasty, have made them kick the beam. They were in league with the banished outlaws of these realms, and with such of their party as had submitted to Charles, and who, although they had failed to defend the cause of Manfred, already dreamed of a renewal of the war. They were encouraged by the disaffection of the people, who, far from finding the imposts diminished under Charles's rule, were more than ever molested by the innumerable ministers and officials of the government, all proud, covetous and inquisitive, and the more intolerable that they were foreigners, especially in Sicily, the insolence of authority being more offensive to those who have not been subdued by arms; and all bitterly deplored Manfred, whom they had abandoned to

his fate because he took from them a part of their substance, now that they had found a ruler who not only despoiled them of all, but also subjected their persons to violence.

Within a year, therefore, of this sudden conquest, we see Ghibelines, exiles from the kingdom, barons subject to Charles, and foreign princes, all rouse themselves from their lethargy, and conspire together. The Ghibelines collected funds, and Conradin eagerly entered upon the undertaking. He was joined by the young Duke of Austria, his kinsman, and followed by many German barons, and men-at-arms, either from love of party, or hope of gain. Even from Africa there rose up to aid him two forgotten scions of the blood royal of Castile, Henry and Frederick, who, having fled from their native land, fought as mercenaries in the pay of the King of Tunis, but, either weary of his service, or regarded by him with suspicion, they plunged once more into Christian broils. Henry, besides this, bore a secret grudge to Charles, because, when the latter was preparing for the campaign, he had lent him a large sum of money, collected in Africa and deposited at Genoa, and Charles,

having achieved the conquest of the kingdom, neither bestowed lands and fiefs upon Henry, nor restored the money, but continually put him off with deceitful courtesies, and at length, weary of the Spaniard's remonstrances, returned him a rough answer ;<sup>1</sup> and for this cause Henry sought revenge. Eager partisans passed from one to another, collecting and uniting these scattered threads of intrigue ; Conrad Capece journeyed repeatedly between Germany and Tunis ; and so much did they accomplish, that, in the same year, 1267, Conradin descended upon Verona at the head of a German army of four thousand horse, and several thousand foot. Don Henry of Castile was tumultuously elected in Rome to the office of Senator, every where the Ghibelines arose in arms, and Sicily broke out into open insurrection against King Charles.

Don Frederick and Capece were no sooner informed that Conradin had crossed the Alps, than they set sail from Africa, as had been preconcerted, to raise the Suabian standard in Sicily.

<sup>1</sup> This reason for the enmity of Henry of Castile is given by Bernardo d'Esclot, *History of Catalonia*, ch. 60 ; ed. Buchon, 1840.



They landed at Sciacca, on the southern coast, with twenty horse, and a few hundred foot, a medley of Spaniards, Tuscans, Germans, and Saracens. Capece declared himself the representative of the king, despatched messengers to his partisans and confederates, and published the proclamation of Conradin, exhorting the people to rise in his sacred cause, who, as an infant, had been betrayed by the brother of his father and by the head of the Church, and now grown up, came in arms, trusting in the loyalty of his subjects, to drive out their oppressor, and the usurper of his kingdom. The report of this daring invasion spread rapidly, and was eagerly welcomed by the Sicilians; while the French, deeming it at first but little formidable, affected to despise it; and Fulk de Puy-Richard, governor of the island for Charles, indignantly advanced, at the head of a powerful army of his own people, and of the feudal militia of Sicily, to repel the invaders, who, perceiving the approach of the enemy, and confident in the success of their negotiations, immediately came forth to battle. At the first encounter, the Sicilian feudatories gave way, feigning to fly; but presently halting,

they tore in pieces the colours of Anjou, unfurled those of Suabia, and with a threatening aspect, marshalled their ranks in battle array; where-upon Fulk, abandoning the field, fled hastily to Messina, which, with Palermo and Syracuse, alone retained its allegiance to Charles. Through all the rest of Sicily spread the sudden conflagration, kindled every where in the name of Conradin, yet was no deference shown to his authority any more than to that of Charles, but all tumultuously struggled to increase their own power. The Provençal forces were weak and intimidated, those of Frederick and Capece few and disorderly, and the curse of party, which had already found its way into the country, did not serve to strengthen either side, but vented itself in acts of private vengeance. At the coming of Charles, the instinct of servility, or the hope of power or profit, induced many to bow down before the new authority, concealing their cowardice under a cloak of partisanship; many more regarded it with profound abhorrence. The former were called *Ferracani*, the latter *Fetenti*, names whose origin is unknown, and which our histories leave in well-merited ob-

scurity, as they were never heard except in this revolution, and both were earned by atrocious crimes. The misgovernment of Charles served as a bitter but efficacious remedy, to dispel these factions, by uniting them in the bonds of a common and savage hate, and thus, at the time of the Vespers, there scarcely remained a shadow of party, though the word *Ferracano* was still retained as a term of insult and contumely, signifying a partisan of foreign tyrants, and traitor to Sicily.

I will not pause from the pursuance of the noble task I have chosen, to particularize the horrors of the anarchy which marked the year 1267. I will only say, that the seeds of hatred were then sown which were afterwards to impart to the Vespers at once a more sanguinary and a grander character; for it often happens that the greatest evils lead to final good, and the measure must be full to overflowing before men amid their feasts, their loves and speculations, their small ambitions, and innocent or vicious leisure, will recollect their duties as citizens, and risking the sacrifice of this short and evil life, will rise as

champions of the public weal. This is widely different from the assumption of liberty to act amiss, without method or worthy object, which then prevailed in Sicily. Barons, burgesses and vassals mutually injured each other by rapine, murder, and every species of violence: the weak, oppressed as usual both by friends and foes, knew not whom to obey: Sicily was bathed in blood, and those who escaped from the fury of man perished by famine or by pestilence. It was in vain that Count Frederick Lancia was sent hither by Conradin, with a small fleet of Pisan galleys; in vain that Charles despatched the Prior Philip d'Egely, of the military order of the Hospitallers, who were more eager to take part in our struggles than in the holy wars of Palestine. The people were adverse to the partisans of Charles, while the three heads of Conradin's party disputed the supreme command with each other, and thus dividing their forces, betrayed at once their own cause and that of the prince. These two factions, neither of which could exert itself effectually to put down the other, wasted the unhappy island to no purpose, until, after the death of Conradin, the

king sent his executioners from Naples to heal her wounds.<sup>1</sup>

Charles, unused to the sudden outbreaks of Italy, was terrified on beholding half the peninsula rising in favour of Conradin, Sicily lost, Apulia infected with the spirit of rebellion, and Conradin, whom the want of means had at first arrested at Verona, victorious on the Arno, gathering strength in Rome by the assistance of Henry of Castile, and, heedless of anathemas, advancing in a menacing attitude against the kingdom at the head of 10,000 horse, and a still greater array of foot, made up of Germans, Spaniards, Italians, and exiles of Apulia. Nor could Charles muster an army equally numerous; but his troops were for the most part French, better disciplined, and commanded by more experienced leaders, and he boldly made head against the enemy near the frontier. They joined battle at Tagliacozzo, in the plain of San Valentino, on the 23d of August, 1268; and fortune

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, book iv. third and following chapters. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 8, 9. Giovanni Villani, book vii. ch. 20—23. Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1267, §§ 2, 12 and following; 1268, §§ 2—29. Nic. de Jamsilla, in Muratori *R. I. S.* vol. viii. p. 614 and following. See also diplomas in the royal archives of Naples.


had already declared for Conradin, when the third division of the French army, led by the veteran Alard de Valery, and William, Prince of the Morea, appeared on the field, and with great slaughter broke the ranks of those whom the confidence of victory had thrown into disorder. The chiefs of Conradin's army were taken prisoners, and their followers slain by thousands. Charles, finding several Romans amongst them, not content to take their lives alone in revenge for his deposition from the office of Senator, in the first burst of his indignation, commanded that their feet should be cut off; but afterwards, fearing that they should drag themselves to Rome to increase the hatred of its inhabitants against him by their miserable plight, he revoked the order. They were shut up in a house and burned alive. And this was the champion of the Church! Conradin was recognised as a fugitive at Astura, and taken by treachery. His partisans, though still strong in numbers, were dismayed by this defeat; they disbanded themselves, each one seeking only his own safety, and thus all were lost.<sup>1</sup> Charles of

<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Villani, book vii. ch. 24—27. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 9. Saba Malaspina, book iv. ch. 13.

Anjou retained his kingdom, as he had gained it, by a single battle; but the means which he adopted, at once to secure and revenge himself, are painful to record.

I will begin with Conradin, although, before his blood was shed, that of his subjects had already flowed in torrents. Some attribute the evil counsel concerning him to Clement, whom others exonerate; my own belief is that the Pope and the King, urged on by indignation for the fear he had caused them and anxiety for the future, were agreed in desiring the death of the youth. They were not executioners in a dungeon, but representatives of the nation, before the eyes of God and of the people, who defiled themselves with the guilt of the murder thus enjoined. King Charles summoned a Parliament of barons, syndics and burgesses of the cities of Apulia; every judicial form was mockingly observed; so that it seems like a foretaste of later times to read the logic by which, as usual in such cases, that singular court condemned Conradin and his followers to death. One Guidone da Suzara, a famous professor of civil law, who was not a subject of Charles nor ambitious of his favour, alone dared to oppose the

sentence; the consciences of the rest smote them, and the well-disposed sorrowed in their hearts; even the French execrated the monarch's cruelty; but the king's will was known, the judges trembled, and opposition was vain. A youth of sixteen, last scion of so long a line of emperors and kings, himself rightful sovereign of Sicily and Apulia, was led forth to execution in the market-place of Naples, on the 29th of October, 1268, followed by a string of victims, that the vengeance of the tyrant might be more ample on those who had roused him from his repose. By the side of Conradin walked the young Duke of Austria, the beloved companion of his childhood; both were fair and comely, and with an intrepid countenance and firm step advanced towards the scaffold. It was covered with scarlet, in semblance of regal pomp, and sullenly guarded by armed soldiers; the market-place was crowded with people, while, from the roof of a tower, Charles, like a crouching tiger, watched the scene. Conradin ascended the platform, showed himself to the spectators, and having listened to the sentence which proclaimed him a sacrilegious traitor, nobly protested against it before God and the people.





At his words a murmur ran through the multitude; then all were silent, paralyzed with fear, and, pale and terrified, fixed their eyes on Conradin. He gazed around upon the sea of horror-stricken countenances with a smile of bitter scorn, then raised his eyes to heaven and bade farewell to every earthly thought. Roused by the sound of a falling stroke, Conradin beheld the severed head of the Duke of Austria lying on the scaffold; he hastily raised it from the ground, pressed it to his bosom, kissed it repeatedly, embraced the bystanders even to the executioner, then laid his head upon the block, and the axe fell. It has been related that he had previously flung down his glove in token of the transmission of the investiture of the two kingdoms to Peter of Aragon, son-in-law of Manfred; also that the Count of Flanders, the husband of one of Charles's daughters, unable to endure the sight of this unholy sacrifice, with his own hand slew Robert of Bari, who framed and pronounced the sentence. The peculiar customs of the age assuredly rendered these occurrences probable, but I have others to relate more undoubted and

more fearful, before we can turn from the contemplation of these horrors.<sup>1</sup>

All those on the mainland who had remained faithful to Charles, or who had hesitated so long as the victory remained doubtful, wishing now to clear themselves from all suspicion, constituted themselves at once judges and executioners of those who had openly espoused the cause of rebellion. The Parliament had offered up royal victims to the king; the inhabitants of the provinces sacrificed to him their followers; and received possessions in reward for their fidelity or for their crimes.

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 9, 10. Giovanni Villani, book vii. ch. 28, 29. Saba Malaspina, book iv. Frate Francesco Pipino, book iii. ch. 9. Ricobaldo Ferrarese, *Hist. Imp. an. 1268*, &c.

A verse of Dante, no matter whether correctly or incorrectly interpreted, gave occasion to his first commentators, not long after the thirteenth century, to relate an anecdote concerning the death of Conradin. In their time there was a saying that Charles I. of Anjou, in observance of a semi-pagan superstition derived from Greece, had caused a soup to be made, which he had eaten upon the corpses of Conradin and of his fellow-sufferers; this rite was supposed to cleanse the observer from the guilt of homicide, and to stop the course of vengeance. The verse is this :—

“ . . . Ma chi n' ha colpa creda,

Che vendetta di Dio non teme suppe.”—*Purg.* c. 33.

I am not disposed, like Biagioli, to laugh at this commentary, for the annals of the human race every where record superstitions

They confiscated, they plundered, they slew, they blinded, they tortured, till Charles himself checked the inhuman zeal which was reducing the kingdom to a desert; and at length vouchsafed to forgive.<sup>1</sup> But for the Sicilians there was no mercy.<sup>2</sup> He despatched some of his French barons to bring them to slaughter, the foremost of whom was William l'Estendard, a man of war and bloodshed, who held pity in contempt; more cruel, says Saba Malaspina, than cruelty itself, drunk with blood, and thirsting for it the more fiercely the more he shed. He crossed the strait with a company of valiant Provençaux, augmented it, to

at least as impious and absurd as that of eating soup over the corpse of the slain. Nor was Charles of Anjou what in these days we should call an *esprit fort*. But as I find no mention of this circumstance in any of the contemporary historians of the party hostile to him, I conclude that either it was a fable invented after their time, or that they were silent concerning it, as being manifestly untrue. I have therefore passed over this incident, which would otherwise afford a trait strikingly characteristic of Charles, of the times, and of the nature of the condemnation of Conradin.

Concerning the works of Guidone da Suzara, see Tiraboschi, *Storia Letteraria d'Italia*, vol. iv. Suzara is a city of the district of Mantua.

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, book iv. ch. 17. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 14. "*Misericordiam*," &c.

<sup>2</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 16. In the preamble it appears that the rebels of Sicily had been "*conculcati, et gladio ultore preempti*."

our shame be it spoken, with brave Sicilians, and crushed without resistance the partisans of Conradin, to whom not a shadow of hope remained. Only in Agosta, a thousand armed citizens, with two hundred Tuscan horse, defended themselves resolutely, aided by their impregnable position, so that William having pitched his camp before it, wearied himself a long time in fruitless efforts, which redoubled his natural ferocity. He was at length able to gratify it without a battle, six traitors having been found to open a postern by night, and thus deliver up the intrepid garrison defenceless into his hands. He regarded neither valour nor innocence, nor any human consideration. His men-at-arms traversed the city defiling every quarter with rapine, violation, and slaughter, ransacking even the cisterns and granaries for victims. But the first onslaught, which satiated the fury of the soldiers, did not extinguish it in the savage bosom of the king's representative. He summoned to the work of butchery an executioner of giant strength; the citizens of Agosta were brought before him bound; and he despatched them with a ponderous sword. When he was weary, brimming goblets of wine were brought to

him, which he swallowed, mixed with the blood and sweat with which he was streaming, and then with renewed strength resumed his horrid task. He raised a pile of heads and trunks on the beach, and there, amid their wretched victims, lay rotting those of the six sons of Judas, who thus at the hands of William received their just reward. Not a living soul was left in Agosta. Many fled to the sea, and crowded so rashly on board a small vessel that it capsized and foundered; while the French soldiery revelled in the blood-stained city, which for long years after presented a squalid and deserted aspect.<sup>1</sup> These inhuman butcheries and equally inhuman triumphs are passed over by the greater number of the historians who so studiously dilate upon the massacre of the Vespers, which was but measure for measure! This slaughter was imitated and emulated by the executions in other places. Conrad Capece fortified himself in Centorbi, but seeing his followers vacillate, he went forth alone and delivered himself into the hands of William, who put out his eyes, brought him to Catania, and there hung him by the throat. Marino and Giacomo, his brothers

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, book iv. ch. 17.

met a similar death at Naples; and the remaining chiefs of the party perished in various ways. The only one who escaped was Frederick of Castile who defended himself in Girgenti, but, as a kinsman of King Charles, William suffered him to depart on board a vessel. The ill-fated cities of Sicily, whether they had joined the rebellion, or had remained faithful to Charles, were subjected to the rapacity of William, who oppressed them with loans and every other pretext for spoliation.<sup>1</sup> Lucera in Apulia, in which the Sicilian Saracens had so gallantly defended themselves, submitted

<sup>1</sup> Account rendered by Bartolomeo dè Porta, justiciary of Sicily beyond the Salso. In the Royal Archives of Naples, reign of Charles I. (1268,) O. p. 75.

We are here informed of the forced loans exacted by order of William l'Estendard, marshal and vicar-general in Sicily; of William de Beaumont, admiral, and of Fulk de Puy-Richard. The siege of Sciacca, as we learn from the same source, served as another pretext for extortion; but I cannot discover whether this were on occasion of the first disembarkation of Frederick of Castile, or of a second after the triumph of the Angevin party. The cities were summoned to send forces to assist in the siege, and money was taken from them in lieu of men. Upon the sum total of these compositions 621 ounces were assigned to the admiral by order of the king.

From the same account we perceive that the price of grain amounted at that time to twenty *tari*\* the *salma* or load.

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\* The tari is equal in value to about 4d. of our money.—*Translator's note.*

soon after, reduced by the horrors of famine, and Charles triumphed everywhere without obstacle. Thus a crushed rebellion serves but to strengthen the power of the sovereign and also to increase the evils of his rule, as he is urged on by indignation on the one hand, and suspicion on the other, and no longer restrained by fear of his subjects, who from exhaustion and distrust of each other, are condemned to long periods of oppression and silent endurance.

## CHAPTER IV.

KING CHARLES CONTINUES AND AUGMENTS THE ABUSES OF THE SUABIAN DOMINATION.—ECCLESIASTICAL IMMUNITIES.—NEW BARONAGE.—IMPOSTS, AND MODES OF EXACTING THEM.—ROYAL DEMESNES AND PRESERVES.—FEUDAL SERVICES, AND OPPRESSIONS TO WHICH THEY GIVE RISE.—ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE.—HIGH TREASON.—MARRIAGE.—VIOLENCE DONE TO WOMEN.—VIOLATION OF POLITICAL RIGHTS.—COMPARISON OF THE RESPECTIVE CONDITIONS OF SICILY AND APULIA.—1266—1282.

IN the ancient Sicilian constitution the monarchy and the aristocracy acted as a mutual check upon each other; the power of the nobles over the persons and property of their vassals was not unlimited, the serfs were less enslaved than elsewhere; the peasants were not serfs, and the citizens and burgesses, even of those towns which were subject to feudal supremacy, possessed privileges and asserted immunities. The judicial authority being derived immediately from the sovereign, could not be employed to further the purposes of feudal ambition. The taxes were moderate, the compulsory service light, general imposts very rare, and granted only by the parlia-



ments, with whom it rested to give their formal sanction to the laws dictated by the king. Such, after long fluctuations of power between the sovereign and the nobles, was the political balance restored by William the Good. The feudal system again disturbed it, and the Emperor Frederick restored it in a more monarchical spirit, as related in the first chapter. He dictated many wise decrees for the diminution of the power of the Barons, levied, sometimes with, and sometimes without the consent of the parliament, those general contributions, which by a fundamental statute of the realm were limited to the four well-known feudal contingencies,<sup>1</sup> and multiplied them by the exercise of arbitrary power. He increased the taxes upon victuals; reserved to himself the monopoly of certain articles of commerce, and thus immensely augmented the royal revenue. Repenting at length, or feigning to repent, in his will he abrogated these violations of the constitution. His sons also disclaimed them in theory, but continued them in practice, impelled

<sup>1</sup> These were, as every one knows,—1. Invasion of the kingdom, or dangerous rebellion. 2. Captivity of the king. 3. Ceremony of knighting the king or his son. 4. Marriage of the king's sister or daughter.

by the exigencies of constant warfare.<sup>1</sup> It was by them that the fall of Manfred was caused, and that of Charles of Anjou prepared. Among the conditions of the Pontifical investiture which Charles had sworn to observe, was that of discontinuing these abuses, and restoring the system of William the Good; instead of which he recalled the times of William the Bad, and even surpassed them, being unable to withstand the temptation of power and of wealth. He minutely investigated the abuses which claimed to be rights of the exchequer, only to render them more irksome, and afterwards converted the rebellion in favour of Conradin into a pretext for every species of oppression both on his own part and on that of his followers. Those of his laws and ordinances which have come down to us; those which, after the Vespers, were promulgated in Apulia by the Angevins, and in Sicily by the Aragonese, to mitigate the evils of maladministration; the remonstrances of the Sicilians to the Pope; the pontifical briefs; the attestations of contemporary historians, whether friends or enemies,—all serve clearly to prove the calamities to which in those

<sup>1</sup> Ordinances of Conrad I. given at Foggia, February 1251.

days Sicily was subject; calamities which fill me with indignation while I write, but of which I purpose to record the retribution.<sup>1</sup>

To begin with Charles's breach of faith towards

<sup>1</sup> Sismondi, in his history of the Italian Republics, vol. ii. ch. 7, affirms that during the reign of Charles I. the malcontent Sicilian barons were despoiled and oppressed, but neither all subdued nor all driven from the island; and that the French inhabited the coasts and cities, but rarely ventured into the mountains of the interior, where the nobles as well as the peasants maintained absolute independence. He does not bring forward any document to prove two facts of such importance; nor, indeed, could he do so; for in examining the records of the time we cannot discover any that could have induced Sismondi to believe that the supremacy of the French in Sicily was limited and disputed. On the contrary, the events, as well as the laws and acts of the government, show that from 1268 to 1281 it levied whatever sums it pleased throughout the whole island, bestowed feudal grants on the French barons in the most remote quarters, and every where enforced its authority and inflicted injury and oppression. If Sismondi, therefore, does not speak of the Barons as obeying outwardly, like all the rest of the Sicilians, those whom they cursed in their hearts, it is no doubt Villani's inexactitude with regard to the conspiracy of John of Procida, and ignorance of many particulars concerning Alaimo of Lentini which have led him to the hasty conclusion, that after the time of Conradin there were still barons remaining in the island in a state of open insurrection. The other supposition, which is still more unfounded, was perhaps suggested by Saba Malaspina's mention of the inhabitants "*de' monti de' Lombardi*," and of the readiness of the Lombard colony of Corleone to follow the movement in Palermo. But Saba Malaspina there relates at large the oppressions suffered by the Corleonese, equal if not superior to those endured by the rest of Sicily, and this would rather go to prove how little those portions of the island enjoyed of that independence which Sismondi attributes to them.



the Church. Clement had granted the realms to him on condition that the ecclesiastics should enjoy all the immunities which they claimed, and which had been denied them by the Suabian princes; and that the possessions belonging to churches or to exiles, occupied by them, should be restored. These conditions Charles swore to observe, which in his capacity of monarch he was not justified in doing; but once in possession of the kingdoms, his avarice induced him to break his word—not, indeed, by an open refusal, but still more dishonourably, by equivocation in words and obstinate contumacy in deeds. While Clement remonstrated in vain, he subjected the clergy and their possessions to the general taxes; and, not content with this, even laid hands upon Church property. The dues of the ports of Cefalù, Patti, and Catania, seized by the Suabians during the war with Rome, he retained in time of peace.<sup>1</sup> Yet he durst not contest the right of a legate, inquisitor, or (so-called) executor of the Holy See in the kingdom of Sicily, (of whom the first was Rudolf, Bishop of Albania,) to assert the authority of the Pope with regard to the restitution of the

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, book vi. ch. 2.

property of exiles, ecclesiastics and churches, nor could he refuse the rescripts necessary to enforce his sentences ; but for the most part he neglected to put them into execution, as in the case of the village of Calatabiano, which Vasallo d'Amelina had taken by violence in the name of the king from the Church of Messina, and in that of another village and farm belonging to the same, which were appropriated by the exchequer ; nor could the decisions of the legate, nor the admonitions of the Popes, and of Gregory X. in particular, obtain their restitution from the avaricious monarch. He taxed, without scruple, the Hospitalers and Templars ; nor did he show respect even to the Court of Rome when he forbade all commercial relations between his subjects and her provinces.<sup>1</sup> Such were his dealings with the Pope. The Sicilian republic of 1282 instantly reinstated the Church of Messina in its possessions ; and yet we find the Court of Rome pouring forth its fiercest maledictions upon the Republic, in order to the restoration of the tyranny of Charles.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, book vi. ch. 3. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 11.

<sup>2</sup> The remonstrance of the Sicilians, which I publish at the end of the work, discourses at length of the wrongs inflicted upon ecclesiastics by the Angevin government.

The augmentation of the baronage under this new monarchy appears to me of great importance. The petty sovereign of Provence and Anjou had borrowed considerable sums of money to defray the expenses of the expedition, and enlisted bands of followers upon the strength of promises rather than of pay; he thus found himself compelled to satisfy the demands of those who had placed him on the throne, and now supported him there; and no sooner was he firmly seated upon it, than the vast lottery began. The lucrative public offices and ecclesiastical benefices, though reserved by him exclusively for his followers, were insufficient: it was lands and fiefs that were required. Charles therefore entered into a minute examination of all the demesnes and baronies, and of the possessions of Manfred and his followers, not to seek, but to find, real or supposed defects in the titles by which they were held. For this, the ban-dogs of the exchequer, greedy, sharp-scented, and covetous, ransacked parchments, cavilled at rights and usages, and even surpassed the king himself in zeal and diligence. No regard was had to prescriptive right or length of possession, the titles were demanded by which every fief was held; and



the threats of spoliation of the rapacious ministers were silenced by gold, which having received, they, after a brief space, renewed their inquisitions and exactions. There was scarcely a fief or a barony which had not been thus ransomed two or three times.<sup>1</sup> The inquiries concerning the royal demesnes were prosecuted with still greater rigour; and terrible were the confiscations for high treason, as we shall have to relate further on. Having thus obtained possession of such countless numbers of boroughs, villages, and farms, Charles bestowed them freely upon his followers, to be held by feudal tenure;<sup>2</sup> and of these grants so many diplomas have been preserved, that some, regarding neither the rapacity by which they were acquired, nor the compulsory nature of his generosity to the chiefs of his army, have hence been led to laud the munificence of the king.

The new barons gratified their followers by subinfeudation; and thus foreign captains and soldiers, hated, mistrustful, and ever ready to resume their arms, were established in our land, and a

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, book vi. Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 23, Concerning King James. Epistles of Clement IV. to Charles, in Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1267, § 4, and 1268, § 36.

<sup>2</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 30.

new species of feudality arose amongst us, similar to the first occupation by the barbarians. This dominion was one of the strongest incentives to the revolution of 1282, as it combined the insolence of victory, the hatefulness of foreign rule, and the exaction of feudal rights and services, customs firmly rooted in France, but hitherto unknown in Sicily. Thus the new feudataries rendered their rule intolerable: they oppressed industry by unaccustomed exactions; laid a poll-tax upon their vassals and upon travellers; kept private prisons for criminals, and oftener still for the innocent; interfered by force in the commercial transactions of their inferiors, and sullied their hands with every excess of violence;<sup>1</sup> concerning all of which we shall have to speak more at large when treating of the mal-practices of the servants and other officials of the king; for they and the feudataries were all alike, without country or law, an assemblage of various nations, French, Provençaux, and Flemings, which, being transplanted into a hostile country, like a band of adventurers, assumed a new and peculiar form,

<sup>1</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, pp. 39, 40; Ordinances of the 10th June, 1282.



and showed a cruel, rapacious, and malignant disposition. Nor should I designate them as French, were it not that the majority were so, and that such is the usage of our histories and traditions. The Sicilian barons meanwhile, accustomed to live with their vassals on the ancient footing, remained in powerless obscurity, oppressed and injured by the king and by their fierce companions. My remarks upon the baronage are, therefore, to be understood as applying to the newer portion; nor must the reader be surprised to find it thus unbridled under so despotic a prince, for, as far as regarded the regal authority, he kept them under restraint: jealously reserving his rights as sovereign in every concession, enforcing them rigorously, without remitting either tribute or service; and even pronouncing sentence of death against usurpers of royal demesnes, and exacting obedience indiscriminately, in this respect alone, from Italians, Provençaux, and French. In other matters Charles left them full licence; for his system of government differed from that of contemporary sovereigns. They endeavoured by the assistance of the towns to keep the nobles in check; he, as leader of his

barons, was maintained by them on the throne. Both he and they were enemies to the people, striving conjointly to keep them in subjection, and to suck their blood and marrow, according to the energetic expression of the historian Saba Malaspina, himself a Guelf and a servant of the Pope.<sup>1</sup>

These bitter words will appear the more appropriate if we consider the administration of the revenue, exacted, not for the requirements of the state, but for the gratification of avarice and ambition; a rapacity which the partisans of Charles excused by pleading the necessity of impoverishing such contumacious subjects, that they might not again array themselves against their sovereign.<sup>2</sup> In feudal times the administration of affairs was conducted on different principles from those in force in modern days, and the burdens appeared lighter, partly because of the lesser amount of expenditure, and partly because of the mask of custom under which they were concealed. The royal demesnes<sup>3</sup> provided for the greater part

<sup>1</sup> According to *Caruso*, *Stori. Sic. viii.* l. 3. 781.

<sup>2</sup> *Saba Malaspina*, *memorie* di *St. Angelo*, *Stori. Lang.* vii. s. 9. 323.

<sup>3</sup> In the middle ages the crown lands were designated as *demense*, being a corruption of the word *dominus*.

of the expenses of the court; and the public charges were defrayed by the people, not so much in money as in personal service, and supplies in kind. Thus ships and armies were furnished by the towns and feudataries, and princes and magistrates with their followers on a journey, were lodged by them free of expense; while those who were subjected to a lower rate of tallage, were bound to assist in the execution of public works, in the transport of goods, and other similar charges. These obligations were known as *servigi*, services or statute labour; the direct and general imposts as *collette* (collections), and the assessed taxes on victuals, which were often secured by deductions on the sale, as *gabelle*. It was of these that the revenues of the state were composed in Sicily; but the mildness of the constitution tempered every burden. The House of Suabia, as I have said, disturbed the balance, and Charles, burning, as his historian expresses it, with an insatiable thirst for gold,<sup>1</sup> destroyed it altogether, and came almost to open rapine.

Two letters of Clement the Tenth, addressed to him at the beginning of his reign, are still pre-

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, book vi.

served to us. They are models of political prudence and humanity: but Charles treated them with the contempt which despots generally show for good advice. These letters touch upon every part of the administration of the state; and concerning taxes unlawfully levied, the Pope writes thus:—"Son, we advise thee, that calling together the barons, prelates, and principal burgesses of the towns, thou shouldest expose to them thy wants and the expediency of defence, and that with their consent thou shouldest determine the subsidy due to thee. Be thou then content with it, and with thy rights; leave thy subjects free. . . . . Consult with the parliament regarding the cases in which thou mayest levy contributions on thine own vassals, or on those of the nobles."<sup>1</sup> And the pious king, neither summoning parliaments, nor compelled by the exigencies of the state, nor observing any limit whatsoever, levied these general contributions, one after another, often many times in the same year; sometimes multiplying and increasing the ordinary tributes, sometimes devising new and extraordinary ones, such as that

<sup>1</sup> Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1267, § 4. The first has no date, the second is from Viterbo, the 6th Feb. 1267.

of timbers and seamen; sometimes, in his haughty impatience, leaving it to his ministers to invent a pretext for their exaction.<sup>1</sup> Thus the edicts were promulgated, and the collectors sent forth; and the fruits of industry not sufficing to meet such direct, frequent, and immoderate exactions, the oppressed victims fled from their homes;<sup>2</sup> or if they had not the heart to do this, and by taking the bread from their mouths contrived to pay a part of what was demanded, they still saw themselves deprived of their household goods, of their beasts, and of their implements of husbandry,<sup>3</sup> and even their houses demolished, and themselves dragged to prison. There they were fettered with iron manacles, denied food and drink, and nobles and commoners, old and young, men and maidens, crowded indiscriminately together; giving occasion or pretext to deeds of still greater violence.<sup>4</sup> "A thousand new artifices," exclaims

<sup>1</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 1, Concerning King James. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 26. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 2. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 12, 13.

<sup>3</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, 1272, p. 4.

<sup>4</sup> Letter of the Sicilians to Pope Martin IV. in the Anonymi Chronicon Siculum, ch. 40, in di Gregorio, Bibl. Arag. vol. ii. p. 154.

D'Esclot, ch. 88, declares that as many as four general collec-

a remonstrance of the Sicilians recalling the days of their servitude, when, after the Vespers, they were admonished to return to it,—“ a thousand new artifices are taught them by the unextinguishable thirst, the frenzy of avarice. On the lists of the collectors the number of the men is augmented, whereas they are, in fact, diminished by the lists of proscriptions. Our goods are not our own ; it is for them that we till the soil. Oh would they but leave a piece of bread to the cultivators ! Would they but be content to eat, instead of devouring ! But no ; the owner can neither secure the goods, nor can the goods secure the owner. These insatiable worms swallow up and absorb everything. We are scarcely so much as suffered to dispute the carrion with the crows.”<sup>1</sup>

Whilst the poor were thus harassed, even the rich could not secure the safety of their persons by the sacrifice of their property. They paid the taxes ; but that was not enough, as the collectors

tions were levied in one year, and adds another form of cruelty, not recorded by our own historians, and therefore the less to be believed, namely, that those who did not pay were branded on the forehead, and that the collectors had two collars and chains fastened to their saddle-bow, to which they fastened defaulters by the neck.

<sup>1</sup> Document at the end of the work.

refused to give them a receipt until they had themselves exacted a large gratuity.<sup>1</sup> The king, on his side, demanded from his officials the immediate payment in coin of the dues of the whole country, which it was their concern afterwards to extract as best they might from the inhabitants. If any one refused the office of collector, he was thrown into prison, and loaded with chains until he accepted it; nor was he even then released without payment of an additional sum to redeem himself from captivity; and as soon as one was set free, another was found to be submitted to the same process of extortion, still more exorbitant in those days when usury was carried to so great an extent. Besides this, strict commands were often laid upon the justiciaries, captains of the ports, and other functionaries, to anticipate the payment of the taxes; nor were the loans less frequent which were exacted by the king from towns or individuals, and of which he fixed the conditions and regulated the payment, solely according to his own will and pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 26.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont. loc. cit.* p. 333. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 12. Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 8, Concerning King James. And several diplomas in the Royal Archives of Naples.

Still greater, because universal, was the injury inflicted by the debasement of the coinage, which had been so well regulated by the Suabian sovereigns, while, in the greater part of the European states, it was grossly tampered with, to the great profit of the exchequer.<sup>1</sup> Charles, who imitated the Suabians only in their faults, in this instance followed the example of foreign rulers, and, as usual, surpassed them. Instead of the ancient augustals, he had caused to be coined at Naples carlines and half-carlines of gold, called after his own name, and which have descended to our times. These he affirmed to be of the same value as the augustals, and of the purest metal, and, in the very same edict, virtually gave the lie to his assertion, by employing the fear of punishment to give currency to his new coin; for, with his usual cruelty, he commanded that for issuing or receiving carlines of gold at a lower valuation than that established by the edict, the penalty should be, in the case of a public functionary, the confiscation of his goods and the loss of a hand; in that of a private individual, being branded in

<sup>1</sup> *Memorie storiche ed economiche sopra la moneta bassa di Sicilia*, by Antonino della Rovere. Palermo, 1814, ch. 3.



the face with the coin itself, heated upon burning coals.<sup>1</sup> Every year, moreover, and sometimes more than once a year, Charles caused debased coin to be struck at Messina and Brindisi, of a sorry alloy, containing a vast proportion of copper to a few grains of silver. This coin was called *danari*, and as it could not be brought into circulation by other means, it was distributed compulsorily to the inhabitants of every city or township, who were obliged to take it at the exorbitant statute valuation, and give in exchange for it pure gold or silver specie. The treasury gained by this means more than eighty per cent., and the loss to individuals was enormous, for neither authority nor terror ever yet succeeded in giving value to that which is, in itself, worthless, so that, in four or five days' time, fifty *danari* would only be worth six, and by the end of a week not more than one.<sup>2</sup> The king, meanwhile, aggravated the ill effects of this debasement of the coinage by

<sup>1</sup> Many particulars concerning the gold coinage of Naples are to be found in a diploma in the Royal Archives of Naples, reg. 1268, O. p. 91.

<sup>2</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 10, Concerning King James. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, 10th June, 1282, p. 25. Saba Malaspina, *Cont. loc. cit.* p. 332. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 11. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 12. D'Esclot, ch. 88, and various diplomas.

the very means which he adopted to diminish them; namely, by forbidding the exportation of bullion, or of any coin except his own.<sup>1</sup> This was worse than tax or subsidy—it was a downright fraud, oppressing and destroying commerce, and perpetrated in the blindness of avarice without regard to the not far distant future, when all efforts would be vain to extort supplies from subjects reduced to the last extreme of penury.

Neither was this the only injury inflicted upon commerce, nor was the rapacity with which Charles monopolised many of its branches, and regulated the traffic in others, limited by the erroneous views of political economy in force at that period. The export of salt, grain, and all articles of consumption, was reserved to himself by the king, or burdened with duties. The port dues, the searches, the investigations, were endless; the forms most vexatious, and equally so the depredations of the officers of the customs, and the terror of the higher functionaries, who were obliged to answer to the king with life and pro-

<sup>1</sup> Catalogue of Parchments, vol. i. pp. 181, 184. Diplomas of the 4th and 31st August, 1279.

perty for the observance of his decrees.<sup>1</sup> While the Treasury thus assumed the controul of the foreign commerce, interdicting all participation in it to others, it oppressed and stifled internal activity, by what the Emperor Frederick denominated new statutes, and which were, in fact, new taxes on various provisions, and monopolies of the sale of salt, steel, silk, and other varieties of merchandise.<sup>2</sup> Besides this, King Charles, entering still further into the details of trade, and taking the baronial rights as his guide, in some places erected mills, forbidding that flour should be ground elsewhere, and in others undertook the manufacture of bread, which his subjects were to obtain only from their loving monarch; and both mills and ovens, old taxes and new imposts, the rents of lands let on lease, mulcts, and even the fines of the courts of justice, were farmed out to any whom he could find to pay for them, so that the rapacity of the farmers of the revenue was added to his own, for the further spoliation of the people. If such farmers were wanting, the king

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 12. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, 26th Jan. and 20th Feb. 1274, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> See di Gregorio Considerazioni sulla Storia di Sicilia, book iii. ch. 6, 7.

sought out the most wealthy, and compelled them to take these offices on credit, as it was then called; that is, they were to collect the money on their own account, paying to the king a sum fixed by him at his pleasure, and for which, in these altered and calamitous times, the scale was regulated by the standard of the last year of Manfred's reign, in which the revenue had attained to double or treble its present amount.<sup>1</sup>

Nor were even the artifices of Tiberius wanting. We learn from many documents that the officials, convicted of fraud in the rendering of their accounts, compounded for money with the king, who thus not only reimbursed himself, but became a participator in the spoliation of his subjects, and often forged accusations of fraud against wealthy officials in order to have, what he considered, a fair pretext for despoiling them.

The domains of King Charles were vast, and the courtiers, eager to outrun the prince in his vices, complained to him in their zeal, that his farms were dilapidated by the labourers, and yielded him no profit; that his subjects were too

<sup>1</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 11, Concerning King James. Anon. Chron. Sic. ch. 40.

rich, and that he would do well to compel them to undertake the management of his property on terms advantageous to himself, for was he not lord both of their persons and substance? The king, therefore determined on establishing an industrial society; and compelled the neighbouring agriculturists to undertake his farms, flocks, herds, pigs, poultry, and even bees, on an agreement to divide the profits with him, he determining according to his own pleasure the quantity he was to receive, which never varied, and was exacted with equal severity in seasons of abundance or scarcity, fruitfulness or mortality. Becoming more and more eager in the pursuit of such certain gains, he made use of the meanest methods of increasing them, not overlooking even the milk of his flocks,<sup>1</sup> while he drove his cattle to feed on the fields of his neighbours, not only in the pastures, but even in the best corn land, and woe to him who should complain of the damage done!<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 331, 332. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 12. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 11. Anon. Chron. Sic. *loc. cit* D'Esclot, ch. 88.

<sup>2</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, of the 10th June, 1282. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 357.

Casting a glance over the country, everywhere might be seen royal preserves, and this not so much for his own pleasure as for the oppression of the people. He seized at will upon the arable lands of private individuals, and transformed them into forests, issuing the fatal proclamation that designated them as set apart for the chase. And not only was he who shot a deer or a chamois a lost man, but even he who only sojourned in or traversed these spots, or who failed to please the royal foresters. These, rendered more savage by the poverty and isolation of their lives, kept up a perpetual inquisition around them, and adding cunning to insolence, often fraudulently concealed in the neighbouring hovels some skin or other fragment of game, which they afterwards feigned to search for and to find, and thus effected the ruin of the entire family. The Barons likewise enlarged their parks after the example of the king; obtaining them with equal justice, and preserving them with equal humanity. The suffering thus caused was infinite; and an hour's recreation for the favoured few was not considered too dearly purchased at the expense of long

years of sorrow and starvation to the wretched peasantry.<sup>1</sup>

The great Frederick, when he increased the taxes, had at least suspended the exaction of personal service, a species of contribution oppressive to the people, on whom it weighed very unequally, disadvantageous to the government, and which accorded ill with the well-regulated despotism which he sought to establish; but the present system of keen-sighted avarice exacted the services without remitting the imposts that had been substituted for them, not only demanding the military service and equipment of vessels—which had never been discontinued in former times, though the contribution known as ‘*adoa*’ or ‘*adoamento*’ had sometimes been substituted for them—but seeking out many others of the strangest and most obsolete kinds. Both sailors and landsmen were summoned to serve on board the royal galleys; those who fled or concealed themselves were mercilessly pursued, and the parents, brothers, and sisters of the fugitives

<sup>1</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 28, 64, Concerning King James. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, 10th June, 1282. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 11. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 12. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 331.

thrown into prison, in order that for their sake they might be induced to deliver themselves up voluntarily into the ruthless hands of the commissaries.<sup>1</sup> The townships were compelled to deliver the amount of the taxes in any place that it might please the king to appoint,<sup>2</sup> and the citizens obliged to convey it thither, amid all the risks and inconveniences caused by maladministration. If a man attended quietly to his business he was selected as a messenger to deliver letters or despatches, or to escort prisoners, and it was only upon payment of a sum of money, that he could excuse himself from the office.<sup>3</sup> Vehicles and boats were seized upon by the servants and functionaries of the king, of the magistrates, of the public officers and even of the nobles and feudataries, under pretext of the service due to the king or to the baron; they seized upon the proprietors and compelled them to act as boatmen or as guides, and while compelling them to their

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 12. Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 44, Concerning King James. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 26, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 13, Concerning King James.

<sup>3</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 333. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli 10th June, 1282.



pleasure, gave them only blows in recompense.<sup>1</sup> Thus in the markets, they would take provisions without payment, for the benefit, as they said, of the exchequer, and seal up the wines, reserving all the best for the king and his officials, and leaving the unfortunate proprietors nothing but the refuse ; but mitigating their rigour for money.<sup>2</sup> Thus in a thousand base modes of oppression, in the market-places, in the hostelries, in taverns, the rapacity of the meanest officials rode rampant, emulating that of their superiors. Both great and small, who traversed Sicily in swarms on the numerous errands of this vexatious government, intruded themselves into the dwellings of the citizens, to the abuse of the already oppressive right of free quarters, forcing an entrance, whether with or without right ; using and damaging beds, furniture, clothes, or anything they might find—carrying away what they liked, and what they did not like flinging in the face of

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 334. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, 10th June, 1282. Epistle of Clement IV. in Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1267, § 4.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 334. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, 10th June, 1282.

the proprietor, and departing.<sup>1</sup> The oppressive claims to personal service were carried far beyond the bounds of custom, far beyond those of even the rigorous feudal code, and were regulated by caprice or brutal spite. Even men of noble birth and high station were compelled to carry provisions and wine on their shoulders to supply the tables of these foreigners, and noble youths were kept in their kitchens to turn the spit like scullions and slaves.<sup>2</sup>

But if any one hesitated to obey, or spoke of oppression, or retribution, in an instant the haughty minions raised the whip, or unsheathed the swords which they always wore, while the prohibition of the government compelled the Sicilians to go unarmed; they struck, they slew, or, still worse, they dragged to prison the exasperated citizen who had dared to speak, and then public punishment was added to private violence, and if he did not purchase indulgence for his offence,

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 333. D'Escot, *ch.* 88. Anon. *Chron. Sic.* *ch.* 40, *loc. cit.* p. 155. Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, *ch.* 19, 20, Concerning King James. Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 20.

<sup>2</sup> Nic. Speciale, *book i.* *ch.* 11.

the magistrates, in the name of God and the law, would consign him to death, to prison, or to exile.<sup>1</sup> From this point we will therefore turn to inquire into the administration of justice.

The emperor Frederick was a distinguished lawgiver, and regulated the application of his statutes with wisdom and judgment, excepting inasmuch as he combined with them too rigorous fiscal exactions. The judicial institutions were thus handed over to the Angevin government, which, with greater rapacity and a total want of elevation of sentiment, defaced the good and aggravated the evil to be found in them, and turned the temples of Astrea into brothels, consigning them to such magistrates as knew how to prosper under a tyrant, and who were the more venal that, instead of receiving a stipend for their yearly tenure of the office of judge in the various townships, they were compelled to pay a price for their election. Charles promulgated unprecedented decrees according to his wants, confounding all rights, and passing all bounds; and I have already shown that justice was rather an instru-

<sup>1</sup> Anon. Chron. Sic. p. 154. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 14. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 2. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 333, 353.

ment in the hands of his satellites than a restraint upon their excesses ; so that such of his statutes as have been preserved to us for the protection of persons and property, (which his followers abused with impunity,) appear only in the light of mockery and monstrous hypocrisy.<sup>1</sup> Even after the lapse of so many centuries King Charles cannot deceive us. Thus we find a decree which threatens with the severest punishment those who by force or fraud should occupy the lands of others.<sup>2</sup> And the effects of the badness of the government rather than its care and efficiency, are proved by the laws promulgated against highway robbers, in which it is decreed that any species of proof shall suffice for their condemnation ; that the cities or townships should make good the robberies committed within their territory ; that if the inhabitants do not arm themselves to drive away the bandits, the municipality shall compound with the treasury for money ; and

<sup>1</sup> In a diploma of the 16th April, 1274, King Charles recommends to the Vicar of Sicily that the inhabitants of Eraclea should not be molested or despoiled by their neighbours, "*who are neither French nor Provençaux.*" This, if not a direct confession, at least shows what was the tenour of the complaints of the people. MSS. of the public library of Palermo, Q. q. G. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 4, 15th March, 1272.

that any house or cottage where they might find refuge, or of which the inhabitants should not denounce them, shall be burned. For robberies up to the amount of an *augustal*,<sup>1</sup> the rod, the brand, and exile were the penalty; up to an ounce, the loss of a hand; beyond an ounce, death.<sup>2</sup> The third part of all recovered goods was confiscated to the *exchequer*.<sup>3</sup> A heavy fine, in proportion to the number of the inhabitants, was imposed upon those neighbourhoods where a murder had been committed if the criminal were not to be found; if he were purposely concealed severer punishments were inflicted.<sup>4</sup> And it frequently happened that the magistrate (who bore the title of *justiciary*, and made the circuit of the whole province) hearing of the event, hastened to the spot, to threaten and investigate; and when the accused was brought before him, refused to release him upon bail (a privilege granted by the law),<sup>5</sup> but having got him into his power, and

<sup>1</sup> The coin so called was equal in value to the fourth part of an ounce.

<sup>2</sup> *Capitoli del Regno di Napoli*, p. 10, 1269.

<sup>3</sup> *Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia*, ch. 42, Concerning King James.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* ch. 45, Concerning King James.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* ch. 15, Concerning King James.

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<sup>3</sup> *Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia*, ch. 42, Concerning King James.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.* ch. 45, Concerning King James.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.* ch. 15, Concerning King James.

despoiled him, would often, on the receipt of a bribe, declare him innocent, to the benefit of the king, who then exacted the fine, on the plea that the delinquent was not forthcoming.<sup>1</sup> If such were the administration of justice, let any one imagine what the prisons of such a government were likely to be, and then accuse of exaggeration, if he can, the remonstrance of the Sicilians already quoted. "Others," it says, "are swallowed up in the abyss of a perpetual prison, a prison such as was never framed by the justice or even severity of the law, for securing, not punishing the malefactor. The horrors that I have witnessed exceed all human imagination. At Naples, at the base of a lofty cliff, is a cavern of unnatural gloom and darkness, constantly lashed by the waves of the sea, which surrounds it, and shaken and threatened by the tempests. This have these foreigners converted into a prison, teeming with tortures, which reveal to the prisoners the destined termination of their sufferings. The sighs and groans, shrieks and moanings of those who there pine in fetters, thrill the listener with anguish. This was for years the abode of the

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 333.



wretched inhabitants of the kingdom, and the sport of their tyrants. It was framed by the fury of the sword. And now we come to the thirst for gold," adds the manuscript; and then continues to pour forth its well merited maledictions on the government, which punished with such barbarity the infraction of its laws.<sup>1</sup> The avarice of the exchequer, the corruption of the magistracy, and the rapacity of their subordinates, multiplied these malpractices beyond calculation, and converted the administration of justice, the highest blessing and strongest tie of social life, into a fruitful source of evil and of suffering.<sup>2</sup>

But all that has been related would seem almost like clemency compared with the treatment of those guilty of high treason. After the defeat of Conradin, the king, as we have said, took a cruel vengeance on his adversaries; but this could not satisfy the vindictive pride of his soul. He commanded that after no lapse of time

<sup>1</sup> It seems beyond a doubt that the prison here spoken of must be one in the Castel dell' Uovo destined for state prisoners, and in which were confined Beatrice, daughter of Manfred, Henry Rosso, of Messina, taken in 1282, at the battle of Milazzo, &c.

<sup>2</sup> This is acknowledged in the Capitoli del Re Carlo, 10th June, 1282.

should the pursuit of the rebels be discontinued ; that when taken they should be hanged by the throat, and that whoever should compassionately afford them shelter should be dragged to the gallows with them ; while whoever, seeing, should fail to denounce them, should be punished according to the pleasure of the king.<sup>1</sup> Meantime, criminal inquisitions, both general and partial, blood-thirsty, indefatigable, and inaccessible to pity, were carried on throughout both the kingdoms.<sup>2</sup> They emulated the investigations of the exchequer, aiming first at the persons, and then at the property of suspected individuals ; registered accurately their sources of income, traced what had been spent, and seized upon the personality. The king confiscated the whole, divided the spoil with his minions, and secured to them their ill-gotten wealth by appointing the shortest possible term for the acquisition of a prescriptive title, and the invalidation of the claims of third parties to the property. The rightful proprietors meanwhile were put to death, or saved themselves by flight and voluntary exile, and their families,

<sup>1</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 15, 15th December, 1268.

<sup>2</sup> Epistle of Clement IV. 1267, *loc. cit.*

once rich and noble, were driven from their ancestral homes, to beg for charity in the name of God, or, still worse, to appear before the king as suppliants for a scanty subsidy, which he frequently refused, and even, in one instance, despoiled a wife of all her property for having assisted her exiled husband out of her private fortune. His rage at length confounding every principle, Charles instituted a law forbidding the children of state criminals to marry without the express permission of the king, like a breed of wild beasts that could not be suffered to reproduce itself without danger.<sup>1</sup> The Norman laws, based upon the feudal system, had already subjected the heiresses of fiefs to a similar prohibition; Frederick exercised this privilege strictly; Charles, according to his custom, abused it. These two statutes combined gave the government the right of interference with the majority of marriages; and sometimes Charles would condemn the heiresses of fiefs to perpetual celibacy, in order that their domains might lapse to the state; sometimes, carrying the system of abuse still further, he would compel the richest and

<sup>1</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, p. 23; 22d November, 1271.

fairest maidens to become the wives of the detested foreigners, or of their meanest partisans; and if on rare occasions he permitted a marriage with an Italian, he indemnified himself by a withdrawal of the fief.<sup>1</sup> Thus was every sacred tie of nature, society, and religion violated by this insane tyranny.

Nor was it that of one alone. It was exercised by the sovereign, by his barons, by his followers, in fact by all his partisans. They supplied the deficiencies of each other's vices, until not one was wanting to fill up the measure of the people's sufferings; thus, if immorality was not amongst those of Charles, his retainers made ample amends in this respect. In place of one licentious prince we find thousands of dissolute retainers. They had every means of seduction and violence at their command; the exaction of compulsory hospitality; the exercise and influence of authority; the power of permitting or forbidding marriages, inquisitions, imprisonment for state offences, for naval impressments, for non-payment of taxes,

<sup>1</sup> Epistle of Clement IV. in 1267, *loc. cit.* Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 2, 11. Capitoli del Regno di Sicilia, ch. 22, Concerning King James. Remonstrance of the Sicilians, Docum. ii.

and for a hundred other unjust causes; and the fact that amongst the plundered people they alone were rich, opened to them houses both of good and ill repute, and gave opportunity for the pursuit of illicit loves. Sometimes the arts of seduction were crowned by violence; sometimes the rape was effected without any attempt at concealment; women were insulted before the eyes of their husbands; they respected neither the innocence of the maiden nor the chastity of the widow; they punished the interference of relations by threats and blows, or removed them out of the way with the arm of civil power; they treated tears with derision, and virtue with mockery; the deceived—the doubtful, the reluctant were alike their victims; nor were these scandalous amours subjected to any restraint.<sup>1</sup>

The sovereign, religious and austere as he was, turned a deaf ear to all remonstrances, and fiercely rejected the suit of those who complained of insult, rapine, and deadly injury. His sub-

<sup>1</sup> Giovanni Villani, book vii. ch. 57. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 22. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 2, 11. Anon. Chron. Sic. *loc. cit.* p. 154. Letter from Clement IV. to King Charles, in Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1268, § 36. Francesco Pipino, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. viii. book iii. ch. 10. D'Esclot, ch. 88. Remonstrance of the Sicilians, quoted above.

jects went to him in heaviness to return still more disheartened, and well for them if they were not punished with stripes or imprisonment, or trampled under foot by the horses of the men-at-arms, in their attempts to reach the presence of the tyrant: so says the Remonstrance already quoted. Charles meanwhile smiled upon his ferocious followers; their excesses were spoken of as juvenile transgressions, or acts of just vengeance, and the lamentations and appeals of their victims as the calumnies of rebellious subjects.<sup>1</sup> In vain Clement repeatedly remonstrated in words, in writing,<sup>2</sup> or by his legates despatched to King Charles, and even entreated Louis IX. to exert his influence over him. In vain Gregory X. reproved him in Tuscany, threatening him with the wrath of heaven, and with the scourge due to an unimaginable tyranny which would be loosed against him. "Of the meaning of tyranny I am ignorant," replied Charles; "but I know that God Almighty has been my guide, and therefore I am confident that he will always support me." He redoubled the burdens imposed upon the

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 2. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 332, 353. Remonstrance of the Sicilians, quoted above.

<sup>2</sup> Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1267, § 4, and 1268, §§ 36, 37.

Templars and Hospitallers, and mocked alike at the remonstrances that Marino, Archbishop of Capua, thundered against him soon after at the Council of Lyons; at the horror his words awakened in the assembled prelates; at the legates deputed by the Council to reprove him; and at the epistles of the Pope to the King of France, Philip the Bold.<sup>1</sup>

The Sicilian parliament might one day have demanded redress for all these wrongs, and the solemn vote of the representatives of the nation might have made Charles tremble; but the parliament no longer existed, for, as already stated, he never called one in Sicily; nay more, whereas the Norman sovereigns were all crowned and anointed at Palermo, and resided there, surrounded by the officers of the state, and all the splendour of royalty; whereas, the Suabians changed none of these established usages, although, in accordance with the fortunes of war, they often wandered far from their capital; Charles, on the contrary, having seized on his usurped crown beyond the Garigliano, continued indeed to call Palermo the metropolis and seat

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, book vi. ch. 3, 4, and following.

of government, and to make deceitful protestations of his great love for the city, but, at the same time, transplanted the court to Naples, not by statute, but in fact, in order not to be enclosed by the sea, and to be nearer to France, to Provence, to the court of the Pope, and to the struggles and convulsions of Upper Italy. With this object he not only injured Sicily in her dignity and in her rights, but also in her material interests. He crushed the various branches of industry maintained by the luxury of the court and of the nobles; and condemned to abject poverty those who derived their maintenance in divers ways from the ancient system; he drained the wealth of the country without giving any equivalent, and deprived it of the money paid in taxes, of which not a particle was suffered to return for the benefit of the contributors. Added to all this was the plague of subordinate rulers, the unequal administration of justice, and the ill-will of the government, which returned hate for hate, and struggled with perpetual suspicion. For these causes the sufferings of Sicily were far more acute than those of the mainland provinces, although the sovereignty

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of both rested in the same foreign and ruthless hands. But, on the mainland, these evils were mitigated by the acquisition of the seat of government, and what Sicily lost, Apulia gained. The residence of the court, and consequent increase of business, caused Naples to flourish, and Charles restored her university, adorned the city with splendid edifices, and gladdened it with festivals and pageants. Meanwhile, tears and terror reigned in the island kingdom. The nation was ground down, and oppressed in the mass as much as in its individual members; there was no magistrate who would execute justice, no prince to grant redress, not even a domestic sanctuary, where the detested foreign accents did not penetrate to keep the yoke of bondage more gallingly present to the mind. The Sicilians were not even masters of their private property; they were treated with contempt in their own persons, with insult in those of their women; and lived in constant suspicion and danger. Such was the condition to which Sicily was reduced by violated laws and foreign domination! and such was tyranny in the thirteenth century!

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## CHAPTER V.

RELATIONS OF CHARLES I. OF ANJOU WITH FOREIGN COUNTRIES.—  
 CRUSADE, AND TREATY OF TUNIS.—CHARLES ASPIRES TO THE  
 EMPIRE OF GREEK—HE INCREASES HIS POWER IN ITALY, AND IS  
 CHECKED BY GREGORY X.—DESIGNS OF NICHOLAS III., AND ENMITY  
 BETWEEN HIM AND CHARLES.—PRETENSIONS OF PETER OF ARAGON  
 TO THE THRONE OF SICILY.—SUPPOSED PRACTICES CARRIED ON BY  
 HIM THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF JOHN OF PROVIDA.—WARLIKE  
 PREPARATIONS IN ARAGON.—SUCCESSION OF MARTIN IV.—ARMA-  
 MENT OF CHARLES AGAINST THE EAST.—MANIFESTATION OF  
 NATIONAL FEELING IN ITALY AGAINST THE FRENCH.—NEW OP-  
 PRESSIONS ENDURED BY THE SICILIANS—THEIR RECLAMATIONS,  
 SENTIMENTS, AND DISPOSITIONS.—1266—1282.

WE now turn from the subject of internal administration to that of foreign affairs, without which it would be impossible to develop all the causes which led to the Sicilian Vespers; for it was the unbridled ambition of King Charles which awoke the enmity of the sovereigns injured or menaced by him, and drove to desperation his subjects whom he tortured in order to wring from them the means of carrying on exertions beyond their powers. Charles possessed the county of Anjou by the liberality of Louis IX.; those of Provence

and Forcalquier by his marriage with Beatrice; his Italian dominions by the investiture of the Pope, and by his own valour; and this prosperity served to stimulate his natural ambition. He was resolute and persevering, even to obstinacy, in design; daring in execution; regardless of justice, political or civil, public or private; unchecked by the most transitory feeling of humanity; steeled against love, either by habit, natural temperament, or religious asceticism; brusque in his manners, rude and graceless even in the indifferent verses that he composed; avaricious, rapacious, regardless of right; but neither severe nor niggardly towards the associates of his ambition. From a child he was inured to arms, and followed his brother in his first African crusade, in which he distinguished himself as a warrior, not only by his valour, but by the personal qualities which inspire the multitude with confidence or with terror. He was tall and robust, with an olive complexion, and large nose; his countenance expressive of pride, and never brightened by a smile; sober and wakeful himself, he was accustomed to say that the sluggard lost a large portion of his life. His austerity and warlike prowess seem to have been

his only virtues, and to these would have been added religion, had he not given it an interpretation of his own, making it consist in reverencing the priesthood, when it did not thwart his ambition—in endowing monasteries, building churches, and believing that he could serve God by such means alone, while trampling under foot the sublime precepts of Christian charity, as set forth in the Gospel. These good and evil qualities, united with success, caused him to be feared throughout Christendom as a powerful, warlike, and irresistible prince,<sup>1</sup> and from the same causes,

<sup>1</sup> D'Escot, ch. 64. Cronica di Morea, book ii. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 57. Paolino di Pietro, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. xxvi. ag. Montaner, ch. 71. Benvenuto da Imola—see his commentary on the Divine Comedy, verse:

“ Cantando con colui dal maschio naso.”—*Purgat.* c. 7.

Charles of Anjou, notwithstanding his unpoetic nature, composed a few verses, because they were always ringing in his ears at the court of Provence. M. C. Fauriel, in his biographical notice of Sordello, *Bibliothèque des Chartes*, vol. iv. Nov. and Dec. 1842, gives a translation of a poetical reply by Charles to some verses, in which Sordello accused him of ingratitude. Sordello had lived at the court of the Count of Provence, and followed him in his expedition against Manfred; but falling ill at Novara, in Piedmont, he remained there for a long time, forgotten, and a prey to illness and poverty. The histories of France give us many instances of the shameless covetousness exhibited by Charles in France, before the possession of Naples and Sicily opened to him a wider field for its display, and at the same time bear witness to the justice of St. Louis, who compelled him to the restoration of his ill-gotten pelf.

urged on by the impulse of his nature, and blinded by prosperity, he mounted rapidly to the summit of power, and fell as suddenly. He had no sooner possessed himself of the throne of Manfred, than he turned his eyes upon the Greek empire beyond the seas, and Italy beyond the Garigliano, torn, the one by heresy, tyranny, and the contests of two rival races for the throne, the other by political dissensions ; while he saw Rome ready to assist him with her whole power,—in Greece with the sword of the spirit, in Italy with that of the Guelfs. Thus, from the year 1266 to 1282 Charles gave himself up to new schemes of ambition, which we will trace in succession, following up the course of events, rather than strictly confining ourselves to the order of time.

And first, we must record how Louis IX. diverted him from these designs, to take part in a fruitless expedition. Burning with pious zeal, Louis resolved once more to attempt the invasion of Africa, which had already proved so fatal to France. He preached the crusade throughout all Christendom, endeavouring to win over to it the feeling of the age, which had already taken another direction, and that of his brother, who took more pleasure

in making war upon wealthy Christian states. The French ambassador despatched to solicit Charles to take part in it, demanded also the reimbursement of the sums supplied him when a poor prince of the blood royal, and which were not repaid, now that the need of the King of France far exceeded his. Charles durst not refuse the invitation, but he temporised, advising, ostensibly for the interest of the expedition but in reality for his own, that the first attack should be directed against the kingdom of Tunis, which had paid tribute to Sicily ever since the times of the Normans and now struggled to free itself from this burden. Having at length collected his forces in Sicily, King Charles crossed over to Africa, where he alone was to reap benefit amidst the ruin of his countrymen. He found the French host encamped at Tunis, decimated by hunger, pestilence, and the sword of the enemy; but his brother, the brave and pious Louis, was no longer amongst them; he had been seized by the contagion, and expired at the very time of Charles's landing, the 25th July, 1270. Charles cared neither for the wishes of his brother, nor for the fate of the Holy Sepulchre; and, as in the last crusade, he had

no sooner redeemed himself from captivity than he abandoned Louis, to go and oppress his new subjects in Provence, so now he concluded a treaty with the King of Tunis, in which it was stipulated that the crusading army should retire, that the Christians of those provinces should be allowed the free exercise of their religion, and that he himself should receive a large sum of money, together with the augmentation of the tribute.<sup>1</sup> It was therefore regarded as an act of divine vengeance for the abandonment of the campaign, when the fleet, which had retired from Africa, was shattered by a tempest in the port of Trapani, and the treasure engulfed by the waves.<sup>2</sup> Charles's name became still more infamous throughout Europe, by his rapacious efforts to secure a profit to himself from that fearful disaster,<sup>3</sup> despoiling the warriors of the Cross and his brothers in arms, under colour of a statute of William the Bad, which appropriated the goods of shipwrecked persons to the exchequer; but to this he was

<sup>1</sup> Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1270, § 23. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 37. Muratori, *Ann. d'Italia*, 1270. Saba Malaspina, book v. ch. 1. *Gesta Philippi III.* by Fr. Guillaume de Nangis, in Duchesne, *Hist. Franc. Script.* vol. v. p. 516.

<sup>2</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 38. Raynald, 1278, § 24.

<sup>3</sup> *Annali Genovesi* in Muratori, *R. I. S.* vol. vi. p. 551.

indifferent; he saw in wealth only a source of power, in power only a source of wealth.

The unbridled rule of a corrupt court and of a clergy embittered in theological disputes, had at this period reduced the Greek empire to the verge of dissolution. It was without effective force, at enmity with the Christians of the West on the ground of religious schism, and deprived by the barbarians of a vast tract of country. A crusading host of Venetians and French had already made itself master of the capital, and placed a Count of Flanders on the throne of Constantine. But for the still greater misfortune of the country, before the new dominion had taken root the fugitive Greek princes recovered courage to withstand it; and at length Michael Paleologus, criminally usurping the reviving sovereignty of the Greeks, renovated it by his courage and prudence, occupying Constantinople and expelling the foreigners, in the year 1267; but was unable to restore the empire to its pristine strength and dignity. Baldwin, the Latin emperor, traversed Western Europe as a pilgrim, and having in vain implored the assistance of the other catholic princes, threw

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himself into the arms of Charles,<sup>2</sup> who, so soon as he had set foot in Italy, and even before the war against Conradin and the expedition to Tunis, commenced his machinations for the occupation of the Greek empire; for such was the evident object of the treaty concluded between him and Baldwin at the court and in the very apartments of Pope Clement—such a bargain as might have been expected between a potentate and a beggar. Taking into consideration, thus Charles wrote, the calamities of the Holy Land, the troubles of the Church, and the desolation of Greece; compassionating moreover the fallen fortunes of the Emperor, he promised within six years to proceed at the head of an army to the recovery of the empire; from which, however, the principalities of Achaia and Morea, and the kingdom of Thessalonica, were to be detached and made over to him; besides which he was to obtain the third part of the conquered territory, and the reversion of the throne of Constantinople, failing the blood of the Courtenays. Charles's infant daughter,

<sup>1</sup> Gibbon, *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, ch. 62.  
See also the contemporary historians quoted by him.

Beatrice, was moreover to be affianced to Philip, sole heir of Baldwin.<sup>1</sup> A few years later he aspired to the practical sovereignty of the Morea, to which this treaty had given him a nominal right; so that the French there established, who at first had heard with rejoicing of the victory of Charles over Manfred, now experienced all the evil consequences of the friendship of a powerful and ambitious neighbour who did not scruple to enrich himself with the spoils of the French dynasty of Ville-Hardouin. For William Prince of Achaia and Morea, of that family, flying before Michael Paleologus, gave himself likewise into the custody of Charles, to whose son, Philip, he disposed in marriage of his daughter and heiress, Isabella; and his death ensuing, as well as that of Philip, the kings of Naples assumed the titular sovereignty of that contested principality, retained Isabella in durance at Naples, pretexting at once suzerainty and protection, and but for the Sicilian war would

<sup>1</sup> The marriage between Philip and Beatrice was celebrated in 1273, and, after the death of Baldwin, the treaty was confirmed between Charles and his son-in-law, who lived at his expense, as is proved by various diplomas in the Archives of Naples, concerning grants of money to Philip, become titular Emperor of Constantinople by the death of his father.

have usurped the entire dominion of the country.<sup>1</sup> Meanwhile Charles, with his accustomed arts, was paving a way for himself to the lordship of the wild regions of Albania; he contrived that its turbulent inhabitants should offer him the throne, and bound himself to them with the customary mockery of oaths, while so little was the confidence felt on either side, that he required hostages from the Albanians (whom he kept in strict custody at Aversa) for the safety of the officers and soldiers sent by him into their country. By these means he approached nearer and nearer to the seat of the Greek empire, surrounding and undermining it on every side.

In Italy, after the fall of Conradin and, with him, of the new-born courage of the Ghibelines, the Guelf party naturally resumed the ascendant; and their influence, that of the Pope, and the fame of victory, all combined for the aggrandizement of Charles, who now treated with derision the bounds within which the jealousy of the Court of Rome had sought to restrain him, in giving him the investiture of the kingdom. He

<sup>1</sup> *Chronica di Morea*, quoted above, book ii. Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1269, § 4. Saba Malaspina, *Cont. loc. cit.* p. 336. D'Esclot, h. 64.

once more assumed the office of Senator of Rome, the command in Tuscany as imperial Vicar, and the relentless persecution of the Ghibelines. He surprised Placentia; occupied several cities in Piedmont, and so many in Lombardy that he had nearly been there proclaimed sovereign. He first conspired against Genoa with the Genoese exiles; then openly assaulted her, and before declaring war, seized upon the property of the Genoese merchants who were carrying on their business in all security within his territories; so that if the powerful Republic had the advantage over him in naval encounters, he still failed not to secure food for his rapacity. Meanwhile there was no violence or injustice that his followers scrupled to commit. At Viterbo, in the temple of God, during the celebration of the holy rites, Guy de Montfort dared to raise his impious hand against Prince Henry of England;<sup>1</sup> and the

<sup>1</sup> Son of Richard Earl of Cornwall, titular King of the Romans, brother to Henry III. As he returned from Africa, he was slain at Viterbo, whither he had been to attend the Pope, before the high altar, by Guy de Montfort, son of Simon Earl of Leicester, in revenge for the death of his father the said Simon. The story will be found in Hollinshed's *Chronicles*, also in the *Storia di Giovanni Villani*, where it is asserted that the heart of the deceased was placed on a pillar of a bridge over the Thames, enshrined in a golden cup, in memory of the outrage. It is to this circumstance

sacrilegious assassin escaped with reproof rather than punishment. Many and many other crimes were committed, less noted in history because the blood thus shed was less illustrious;<sup>1</sup> yet the rage of party not only blinded the eyes of men to these crying evils of foreign domination, but, even in the earlier times of Charles's advent into Italy, caused it to be sought for by several cities. He, alternating force with fraud, obtained a footing here as lord, there as protector; with the spoils of one plundered province, hired mer-

that Dante alludes in the 12th canto of his *Inferno*, where Guy de Montfort is placed in the 7th *Bolgia* amongst the homicides:—

"Colui fesse in grembo a Dio

Lo cor che in su Tamigi ancor si cola."—*Editor's note.*

<sup>1</sup> Muratori, *Ann. d'Italia*, 1268—1272, or the contemporary historians quoted by him. Saba Malaspina, book iv. v. Genoese Annals, book ix. in Muratori, *R. I. S.* vol. vi. p. 554, &c. As regards the assassination of Prince Henry, the culpable clemency of Charles towards the murderers is undoubted. Benvenuto da Imola, in his Commentary on the Divine Comedy, at the verse: "Mostrocci un' ombra dall' un canto sola,"—*Inf.* c. 12, mentions the dilemma urged against Charles: "If he knew it, he was a villain; if not, why did he not punish it?" But the less he desired to punish, the more he noised the matter abroad, partly on account of the Court of Rome. A diploma of the 23d March (1271) in the Royal Archives of Naples, reg. 1268, O, p. 99, contains these words,—that the king purposed to avenge this crime as if it had been committed against the person of his own son. But the measure decreed in this diploma was to sequester the castles and feudal possessions of the brothers Simon and Guy de Montfort; a punishment not very painful of infliction to the king who gained by it the temporary enjoyment of their property.

cenaries for the conquest of another ; sacrificed the substance and the most sacred rights of the many, in order with them to purchase the support of the powerful few ; and advanced with rapid strides towards the dominion of the entire peninsula.

But the Court of Rome, perceiving that he whom she had raised up to be her tool, was becoming her master, now sought to repress his power. Clement did no more than admonish him, because he survived his triumph but a short time. The pontificate remained vacant for three years, during which the power of Charles increased, and the Cardinals, unable to restrain him, regarded him with fear and hatred. Gregory X. was elected in the year 1271, and having long lived far from Italy and from party strife, he entered into the recently awakened suspicions of the Court of Rome, and inclined to new counsels ; whereas his predecessors had fomented the divisions of Italy, he made every effort to heal them ; whereas they had thrown obstacles in the way of the election of an emperor, he sought to advance it, so that the imperial crown was bestowed upon Rudolph of Hapsburg, a man of small possessions, but of a lofty spirit, who laid the foundation of the greatness of the house of Austria.

Paleologus meantime, seeking to evade the conflict with the rapacious piety of the West, sought to win over his subjects to acknowledge the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Father and the Son conjointly, which was the main point in dispute; and though, by artifice and violence he failed to convince the Greek clergy, he yet obtained from them a semblance of acquiescence. This, enabling Gregory to conclude a peace with Greece consistently with the honour of the Holy See, and thus deprive Charles's ambitious designs of their pretext, in the year 1274, at the Council of Lyons, he absolved Paleologus, and admitted the empire of the East into the bosom of the Church. It would be hard for us now to divine what tumult of conflicting thoughts may, during the time of this council, have agitated the mind of Charles, who, to religious fanaticism, united the burning ambition of a tyrant.<sup>1</sup> Grave authorities record<sup>2</sup> that a physician belonging to him

<sup>1</sup> Muratori, *Ann. d'Italia*, 1271—1274. Gibbon, ch. 62. Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1271—1275.

<sup>2</sup> Giov. Villani, book ix. ch. 218. His authority is so much the higher in this matter that he was himself a Gueff.

“Carlo venne in Italia, e per ammenda  
Vittima fe' di Corradino, e poi  
Ripinse al ciel Tommaso per ammenda.”

*Dante, Purg.* c. 20. [See

administered poison to St. Thomas Aquinas, who died on his way to join the council, because the king feared lest his cause should be injured by a man of such commanding talents, who was opposed to him either from family enmity, or from abhorrence of his mal-administration, and who, in his book concerning the Government of Princes, although a partisan of monarchy, had thundered forth the strongest invectives against individual tyranny, and drawn a picture of it in which Charles could behold himself as in a mirror and recognise his own features.<sup>1</sup> But whether or not he were indeed guilty of this crime, the accusation proves in what estimation he was held. More undoubted is the indignation with which, constrained by the Council of Lyons, he laid down his arms made ready against the Greeks. At the same time he saw his career in Italy checked by the influence of Rudolph, notwithstanding the contests in which he was engaged

See also the Commentary of Benvenuto da Imola, which gives credit to the suspicion of poison. I have mentioned it as doubtful, from not finding it recorded amongst the misdeeds of Charles by historians who would have been unwilling to acquit him of any; such as Neocastro, Speciale, Montaner, and D'Esclot.

<sup>1</sup> De Regimine Principum ad Regem Cypri, St. Thomas Aquinas, Opusc. 20, in vol. xvii. of the Venice ed. 1593.



in Germany, and this so effectually, that in the year 1274, (the inhabitants of Asti being the first to throw off his intolerable yoke,) Charles had lost both Piedmont and Placentia, and retained only a doubtful authority in the other provinces of Upper Italy, which he had subdued. The prudent Pontiff did all he could to lessen his power, without assuming an attitude of open hostility.<sup>1</sup>

These sage designs were interrupted by the death of Gregory in 1276, upon which the Angevin monarch resumed his wonted audacity, and, reflecting how important a Pope according to his mind would now be, he made use of every culpable art in the election of the three Pontiffs who reigned and died within the space of one year. He resumed his preparations for war against Michael Paleologus; renewed his practices in Achaia, whither he despatched before him a small force, which the Greeks easily subdued;<sup>2</sup> lastly, he added to all his other titles, that of King of Jerusalem. This, though now an empty name, was disputed by several Christian princes. The Emperor Frederick II. had assumed it in right of his wife, and it now devolved, together

<sup>1</sup> Muratori, Gibbon, Raynald, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 336, 337.

with the claim to the crown of Sicily, upon the sons of Manfred. But there were other claimants, and amongst them Mary of Antioch, a poverty-stricken and fugitive princess, from whom Charles purchased it in consideration of a life annuity of 400 *livres tournoises* secured on the county of Anjou, deeming it a stepping-stone to new dignities, and a fresh pretext for declaring war against the Greek empire which, being regarded as a nest of heretics and traitors that barred all access to the Holy Land, was a just object of attack to the King of Jerusalem.<sup>1</sup> Thus he resumed all his old projects with fresh vigour, and, to achieve his object, he surrounded every conclave with artifice and violence, until, in the year 1277, the French party having declined amongst the Cardinals, Italian interests prevailed over his malice, and raised Nicholas III. to the papal throne.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 336. MSS. of the victory of Charles of Anjou, published in Duchesne, Hist. Franc. Script. vol. v. p. 850. Joannes Iperius, Chron. Monast. S. Bertini, in Martene and Durand, Thes. Anecd. vol. iii. p. 754. D'Escot, ch. 64. Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1272, § 19, and 1277, §§ 16. Giannone, Ist. Civ. book xx. ch. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 337. His name before his election to the Pontificate, was Giovanni Gaetani, of the house of Orsini.

“E veramente fui figliuol dell' Orsa,  
Cupido sì per avanzar gli Orsatti  
Che su l' avere, e qui me misi in borsa.”

Dante, *Inf.* c. 19.

Nicholas was a man of boundless ambition, vast conceptions, and great daring; proud, sagacious, close in design, vehement in execution, heedless of the justice of the means provided the end were attained, which end was to aggrandize the Church, in order to the aggrandizement of the Orsinis, and tended to a glorious result, that of freeing Italy from all foreign dominion. His intention was to found new principalities in Italy, and to bestow them upon members of his house. The emperor and the king were his chief obstacles; he therefore employed Charles against Rudolph, Rudolph against Charles, and the authority of the Church against both. He wrested from the emperor the investiture of Romagna, hitherto considered a fief of the empire; and from the Angevin king the offices of Senator of Rome and Vicar in Tuscany, and held him back with a strong hand from the Grecian expedition for which he was preparing more eagerly than ever; on the one hand, fomenting discontent among the Greeks, who could ill endure the new form of doctrine injudiciously enforced by imprisonment, blindings, and tortures; and on the other, accusing Paleo-

logus as the cause of these very disturbances, and calling him a traitor and insincere in his recantation of heresy. The Pope, nevertheless, persevered in refusing his countenance to the enterprize,<sup>1</sup> wherefore Charles turned his anger and his rapacity against the inhabitants of Syria, and sent thither Roger Sanseverino, Count of Marsico, with the title of Vicar of the Kingdom of Jerusalem, and supported by ships and forces which returned without accomplishing anything except the taking of Acre.<sup>2</sup> The political hatred between Charles and Nicholas was embittered by a private grudge, Charles having refused to bestow a maiden of the house of Anjou in marriage on the Pope's nephew. "His sovereignty is no inheritance, notwithstanding his scarlet stockings," said Charles, as he tore in pieces the letter of the Pope, "nor must his blood be mixed with that of the kings of France." These words (which were repeated to him) were daggers to the heart of the Pontiff, who held the house of Orsini in nothing inferior to that of Anjou, and himself immeasurably superior to it. He treasured

<sup>1</sup> Muratori, *Ann. d'Italia*, 1277—1280. Raynald, *Ann. Eccl. idem.* Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 338.

<sup>2</sup> D'Esclot, *ch.* 64.

them in his heart, to be ruminated upon and to afford food to his indignation, although the semblance of peace was still maintained between him and the king,<sup>1</sup> by mutual dissimulation, and because the latter treated the Pope with reverence in all other matters, being always divided between his ambition and his religious fears. But he was no match for the Orsino, who, unrestrained by any scruple, matured his blows, and waited only the opportunity to strike.<sup>2</sup> Profound peace appeared meanwhile to reign throughout the whole of Europe.<sup>3</sup>

But other causes were springing up to disturb it in a different quarter. Constance, daughter of Manfred, and wife of Peter, King of Aragon, as last remaining representative of the House of Suabia, laid claim to the crowns of Sicily and Apulia.<sup>4</sup> Peter had ascended the throne in the

<sup>1</sup> Ricordano Malespini, ch. 204. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 54.

<sup>2</sup> This may be gathered from all contemporary historians, and still more from the facts. See also the lines of Dante :

“Però ti sta che tu se’ ben punito,  
E guarda ben la mal tolta moneta  
Ch’esser ti fece contra Carlo ardito.”—*Inf.* c. 19.

<sup>3</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 339.

<sup>4</sup> The sons of Manfred were then believed to be dead, because Charles of Anjou kept them in confinement, probably with great secrecy, confirming the report of their death, to take away all

same year with Nicholas III., and though holding the rank rather of first magistrate than of sovereign in his little kingdom, he was a man of a powerful mind and lofty courage. Spain was, at

hope from the partisans of the Suabian dynasty. The children of Manfred were mere infants when Charles conquered the kingdom; and he shrunk from soiling his hands with four such cold-blooded murders, which were moreover uncalled for, as the living sepulture of a perpetual secret imprisonment would effectually supply their place. Thus, contemporary historians state the family of Manfred to have been extinct in the male line, and represented only by Constance and her next sister Beatrice who was liberated in 1284, in consequence of the victory of the Sicilian fleet in the Bay of Naples. Diplomacy, however, which often corrects the traditions of history, has revealed to us that the sons of Manfred, Henry, Frederick, and Enzo, long survived the death of their father. Neapolitan historians have extracted from the archives of that kingdom, some diplomas relative to the furnishing of provisions to these unfortunate princes in their captivity, in the time of Charles II.; and in examining the registered Acts of Naples, I discovered two documents, which appear to me of greater importance as attesting that these princes were still living in 1299, and that orders were then given to take them from their prison, and send them to Charles II., free and escorted by a knight. This took place at the time that James of Aragon had united with the Angevins against his brother Frederick and the Sicilians, and a few days before his victory at the Capo d' Orlando, so that it may be conjectured that the king sought to do whatever might be pleasing to James, whose friendship and alliance he was anxious to retain. But it seems that this act of generosity was only a passing thought, and that the sons of Manfred were soon remanded to another prison. James left Naples almost as an enemy; and Charles would not have dared to disturb Frederick's government in Sicily by means of these pretenders, who might probably have raised the kingdom of Naples against himself.

that period, divided into a multitude of states ; some subject to the Moors, others reconquered by the Christians, and governed by liberal institutions, at once monarchical, aristocratic, and popular, as suited free men who had together encountered and still endured unnumbered perils for the sake of their religion and national independence. The kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia, and Catalonia or the county of Barcelona, acknowledged the rule of the same monarch, but the sovereign power was vested almost entirely in the Cortes of the several provinces, which were composed of prelates, barons, knights and representatives of the towns ; proud of their franchises, and conscious of their power. As in Sparta the Ephori, so in Aragon the inviolable *Justiza* was placed beside the king ; and on the day of his coronation swore to him in the name of the barons, "that they who were individually equal to the king, and collectively far superior to him, would obey him if he would maintain their franchises, and if otherwise, not." <sup>1</sup> Hence arose the

<sup>1</sup> Zurita, Ann. of Aragon. Blanca, Comment. rer. Aragon. Mariana, Storia di Spagna. Robertson, Life of Charles V. Introd. § 3, notes 31, 32.

haughtiness of the subjects, and the condescending manners of the sovereigns, who, far beyond all others of that time, were accessible, familiar and courteous, and the approach to them unfettered by the forms elsewhere demanded by regal dignity or suspicion.<sup>1</sup> With such institutions, and such subjects, who were moreover poor and divided by party feuds, Peter could not reasonably meditate conquest; yet the qualities of the man sufficed to overcome the obstacles presented by such a state of society; although in addition to these, his stern and imperious disposition had, during his father's reign, excited against him the turbulent Catalan barons, and he had ill assoiled himself from the infamy of the fratricidal murder of Ferrando Sanchez, a natural son of King James, whom he besieged, arrested in his flight, and caused to be drowned, assigning in his defence, that Ferrando was practising against his life, in concert with Charles of Anjou.<sup>2</sup> But, at the

<sup>1</sup> Montaner, ch. 20. He adds, that every one who met the king, might stop him at pleasure, and converse with him, or invite him to weddings and banquets, and that he often lodged in the houses of his subjects.

<sup>2</sup> D'Esclot, ch. 68—70. *Geste de Conti di Barcellona*, ch. xxviii. in Baluzio's *Marca Hispanica*, ed. 1688.



same time, the Infant Don Peter had signalized himself by his courage and judgment in the wars of Valencia and Murcia;<sup>1</sup> he had turned the divisions of the nobles to his own advantage, and having attained to great military reputation, and being gifted with that strength and energy which carries away and controuls weaker minds, he could easily assemble his followers, inured to arms, for some adventurous enterprise against the Moors, the other Spanish states, or each other, or even for a piratical attack upon one or other of the Mediterranean cities. Opposed to King Charles this would indeed be but a diminutive force, but daring, active, and especially adapted for irregular warfare, and sudden assaults.

Weighing these chances in his own mind, Peter, as if absorbed in other matters, listened in silence to the perpetual reproaches of his wife. The lapse of years had been unavailing to appease the sorrow of Constance, for the slaughter of her father, the usurpation of the kingdom, and the martyrdom of Conradin; and her feminine enthusiasm attributed to cowardice all that

<sup>1</sup> Montaner, ch. 10, 13, 14. D'Escot, ch. 65, 67, 74. Geste de Conti di Barcellona, *loc. cit.*

delayed the hour of vengeance. She endeavoured to work upon her husband, alternately by entreaties, taunts, and indignant remonstrances, and taught her children, while caressing him and clasping his knees, to remind him incessantly of the unavenged death of their grandfather.<sup>1</sup> Peter only smiled on all these efforts; but, in accordance with his own designs rather than these lamentations, he united himself more and more closely with Roger Loria, Conrad Lancia, and John of Procida.<sup>2</sup>

The first of these three, born of an illustrious family in the town of Scalea in Calabria,<sup>3</sup> related to the Sicilian Counts of Amico, and holding fiefs both in Sicily and Calabria, had come as a child to the court of Aragon in the train of Constance, with his mother, Madonna Bella, the queen's nurse, and was there educated both in arms and in intrigue. Peter regarded him with much favour, raised him to the rank of knighthood,

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 16. See also Montaner, ch. 37. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 342. Geste de Conti di Barcellona, ch. 28, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 340—342.

<sup>3</sup> Diploma preserved in the Archives of the crown of Aragon, and quoted by Quintana, *Vidas de Españoles celebres*. Paris, 1827, vol. i. p. 93.

together with the young Conrad Lancia, a kinsman of the queen, and married him to Conrad's sister.<sup>1</sup> Both the brothers-in-law greatly distinguished themselves in arms; but though Roger was afterwards so greatly to surpass him in fame, Conrad was the first to signalize himself, as a commander of Catalan vessels, in deeds of great daring against the Saracens.<sup>2</sup> John of Procida attained to the favour of the King of Aragon by a more thorny road. He was born or educated at Salerno; and stood high in office both with the Emperor Frederick and with Manfred; besides his fief of Procida, he possessed considerable allodial property at Salerno; was a celebrated physician;<sup>3</sup> and translated from Greek into Latin, or compiled in Latin, the philosophical maxims of the ancient sages. Some, in order to increase his celebrity, or to add pathos to his adventures, state that he

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 87. Roger Loria was nephew of Guglielmo d'Amico, first husband of Macalda Scaletta. Villabianca, *Sicilia Nobile*, part ii. book iii. p. 528, 529.

<sup>2</sup> Montaner, ch. 18, 19, 30, 31.

<sup>3</sup> Di Gregorio, *Annotaz. alla Bibl. Aragon.* vol. i. p. 249, 250. See also Giannone, *Ist. Civ.*, and Buscemi, *Vita di Giovanni di Procida*. An inscription in the church of Salerno, dated 1260, which is transcribed by di Gregorio, as quoted above, gives us the titles of John of Procida, and informs us that it was he who constructed the port of that town.

was driven into voluntary exile by deadly hatred against the French, who had violated his wife and daughter and slain his son while striving to defend them, and the king, who denied him justice on the offenders.<sup>1</sup> But his exile appears to have had a less dramatic origin, from the Documents, which attest him to have been in rebellion before 1270, probably at the time of Conradin's expedition, and which, if they give any hint of domestic injury sustained, would make this appear more probable after his exile than before it.<sup>2</sup> As having been well known at the court of Manfred,

<sup>1</sup> Petrarch, *Itinerario Siriaco*. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 57. Boccaccio, *de Casibus Virorum illustrium*, book ix. ch. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Although it seems untrue that violence done to his wife, Landolfina di Fasanella, should have caused the flight of Procida, it does not appear improbable that, during his exile, she may have listened to the seductions of some one of Charles's barons, and that such may have been the foundation of this episode in the historical romance (for such I believe it to be) of John of Procida. This idea is suggested to me by three diplomas: one given at Capua, the 3d February, 1270, in which Charles I. grants a subsidy, to be levied on the confiscated lands of her dower, to Landolfina, wife of John of Procida, as non-participant in the guilt of her husband, who, it states, "has quitted the kingdom by reason of high treason committed by him against our Sovereign Majesty;" a second, of the same date, granting her safe conduct and security to dwell at Salerno; and a third, decreeing that 100 ounces lent to Landolfina by one Caracciolo, should be paid out of the royal treasury. These three diplomas are taken from the Archives of Naples, and may be found in the registered Acts of 1269.

John sought an asylum with Queen Constance in Aragon, where Peter bestowed upon him the lordships of Luxen, Benizzano, and Palma, and he became his confidential courtier and counsellor;<sup>1</sup> for he was a man of wisdom and learning, whose intellects were sharpened by the intensity of his hate, and whose hard vicissitudes of fortune had given him experience in the management of the varying and inconstant minds of men. These three exiles, who, during their compulsory residence at a foreign court, thought of nothing but their country, and vengeance on the guilty tyrant who had driven them from it, constantly fomented the ambition of the king. They discussed with him the existing state of things; the disaffection of the people of Sicily and Apulia; the blind tyranny of Charles; the designs of the Pope; the fears of Paleologus: together they reflected that the Greek had gold, but wanted forces; that Aragon had forces, but wanted gold; that Rome would furnish weapons of another temper; and they resolved on the enterprise. Charles might exult, if he would, but they would find means to tame his pride. They kept a constant watch upon him, and at each

<sup>1</sup> Zurita, *Ann. d'Arragona*, book iv. ch. 13.

new excess of King Charles, a smile gleamed in that dark council of Aragon.<sup>1</sup>

This was a remarkable period, in which the four princes who ruled the greater part of the European shores of the Mediterranean were all distinguished at once for their valour and their vices, and all worthy, if not of praise, yet undoubtedly of fame. In the East, Michael Paleologus, usurper and restorer of the empire, but astute rather than powerful, trembled before King Charles ; and he, while thirsting for the acquisition of those vast dominions, was sapping the foundations of his own sovereignty in Sicily and Apulia. In the West the King of Aragon, younger and more sagacious, but less powerful, waited in silence and watchfulness for the opportunity of assailing the conqueror. And from the throne of St. Peter, inaccessible to fear, proud of his boundless authority, and no less so of his talents and his ill-gotten wealth, the Pontiff watched the working passions of these foreign sovereigns ; and who can say with what secret hopes ? Perhaps, had Nicholas III. survived, he might have crushed the Angevin dynasty, and changed the fate of Italy in a different man-

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* pp. 340—342.

ner. But it was God's will that Charles should be humbled, not by the lofty, but by the lowly, and that his overthrow should be accomplished by the means that could least of all have been anticipated—by a popular tumult at Palermo!

Peter made his preparations for war, "as is fitting," says Montaner, with the help of alliances, money, and secresy. He concluded a truce with the King of Granada for five years;<sup>1</sup> made a league with Castile, and secured himself still more effectually in that quarter by taking under his charge two young princes, whose claim was prior to that of their uncle Sancho, the declared successor to the throne. Thus, upon the slightest provocation, the King of Aragon had it in his power to let loose the elements of discord upon the neighbouring kingdom.<sup>2</sup> He strove, moreover, to renew the former cordiality between himself and Philip of France, the husband of his sister, who had been his great friend in youth, and now molested him by the occupation of Montpellier.<sup>3</sup> Even towards Charles himself, either to conceal his designs and

<sup>1</sup> Montaner, ch. 37, 44.

<sup>2</sup> Montaner, ch. 40. Bernardo d'Esclot, ch. 76.

<sup>3</sup> D'Esclot, *loc. cit.* Montaner, ch. 38, 39. Geste de Conti di Barcellona, ch. 28, *loc. cit.*

show his hatred, according to Montaner, (which would indeed have been a refinement of art,) or to conceal both, according to Charles's subsequent reproaches, he made demonstrations of friendship, and entered into negotiations for the marriage of one of his sons with the daughter of the Angevin king.<sup>1</sup> He moreover put into perfect condition the arsenals of Valencia, Tortosa, and Barcelona;<sup>2</sup> and so judiciously conciliated his barons and burghesses, that when he demanded of them a subsidy for an enterprise which, he said, would prove of great utility to the kingdom, they granted the funds with unexampled docility.<sup>3</sup> These arrangements, and the subsequent equipment of forces and vessels, are attested by historians the most deserving of credence.

They, however, are silent concerning the practices with the Emperor of Constantinople and the Sicilian Barons, so dramatically composed by other historians of less authority. According to these, John of Procida, a voluntary exile on account of supposed fearful wrongs, is the chief actor, while the other personages, whom history represents in a widely different light, are but as

<sup>1</sup> Montaner, ch. 38, 42.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. ch. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid. ch. 41.

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attendant shadows. Such are Peter of Aragon, Michael Paleologus, Nicholas III., Alaimo of Lentini, and many other Sicilian nobles. They venture neither to think nor to act without him ; at the mere sight of him they melt into tears like children ; while he alone, urged on by patriotism and the desire of vengeance, travels to and fro, assumes various characters, and himself unknown, obtains the confidence of princes and nobles ; he alone designs, commences, and concludes the enterprise. Not knowing that John was an exile, as shown by the diplomas, from 1268 to 1279, and raised to consequence by Peter, they relate that, having formed the design of wresting Sicily from Charles, he began on his own account to treat of it with foreign princes and domestic conspirators. He went to Constantinople in the year 1279 as an exile, seeking there an asylum and stipend from the court, and giving himself out as a physician and statesman, and well versed in all Sicilian affairs. He found the Greek Emperor so easy of access, that he granted him a secret interview on the roof of a tower ; when Procida tried him by describing the military preparations of King Charles against him ; and, when he saw him

perplexed and weeping, caused a sudden ray of hope to flash before his eyes, so that Michael, who saw his own empire in confusion, and Charles eager, menacing, and scarcely restrained by Pope Nicholas, eagerly embraced the proposal to sow disturbance in his enemy's own kingdoms, and proffered 100,000 ounces of gold to be furnished so soon as the undertaking should be decided upon. Procida, now feigning himself to be driven from the Byzantine court, in the dress of a Minorite friar secretly entered Sicily, which appeared to him better adapted for the blow, either because more oppressed, or better disposed by the importance of her cities and the character of her inhabitants, or because defended on all sides by the sea. Scarcely had Procida spoken of conspiracy to those of the Sicilian barons whom he knew, than they deliberately plunged into it. He held a meeting with Walter of Caltagirone, Alaimo of Lentini, Palmiero Abate, and other valiant barons. Procida pointed out to them the means of freeing themselves from their intolerable bondage; revealed the promised assistance of the Greek Emperor, and the designs upon the King of Aragon; directed them, after organizing all the branches

of the conspiracy, to raise Sicily in rebellion; demanded from them credentials and letters to assure Peter of the existence of the conspiracy; and, having received them, proceeded, still in the disguise of a friar, to the court of Rome.

It was in the year 1280, while Pope Nicholas was sojourning at Castel Soriano, that a Minorite friar requested from him a secret audience; which having obtained, he began talking in mysterious terms about the power of King Charles, the insult offered by him to the Pope, and the actual condition of Italy. At length Procida discovered himself, and revealed to the astonished Pontiff the train that had been laid. They add—and this appears an undoubted fable—that he used Byzantine gold to purchase the consent of the Pope, who, with his vast ambition, needed no bribe to stir him up against King Charles.<sup>1</sup> They also add, with, I should think, equal untruth, that, having entered into the conspiracy, Nicholas wrote secretly to the King of Aragon, encourag-

<sup>1</sup> Some have thought that this was referred to in the verse of Dante:—

“E guarda ben la mal tolta moneta,” ec.

*Inf.* c. 19.

In the Appendix I have endeavoured to give a better explanation to this passage of the Divine Comedy.

ing him to the enterprise, and bestowing upon him the investiture of the kingdom of Sicily. Having gained the Pope, John hastened to Catalonia, and, continue these historians, found Peter far removed from any hope of success in the undertaking. He urged the idea upon him; explained the preconcerted measures; showed the letters and treaties, and thus won over the King of Aragon to his purposes. He then resumed his journeyings to relate his success to the other conspirators; disembarked at Pisa: saw the Pope once more at Viterbo: the Sicilian Barons at Trapani: proceeded incognito to Negropont in a Venetian galley: and thence to Constantinople, where the treaty of alliance against Charles was finally concluded with Paleologus. As a surer guarantee, one of intermarriage was also concerted between the courts of Greece and Aragon; which was not kept secret, but served as a pretext for Paleologus to send as ambassador to Aragon one of his knights, Messer Accardo of Lombardy, to whom were intrusted 30,000 ounces of gold as an instalment of the sum promised, to be conveyed to Peter; and Procida and Accardo embarked on board the same vessel. At this

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junction, the death of Pope Nicholas had well nigh caused the failure of the whole scheme. John learnt it on the voyage from a Pisan vessel, but concealed it from Messer Accardo. They landed at Malta, as had been concerted with the Sicilian Barons; and the conspirators met in a secret spot. They were silent and anxious, and talked in subdued tones of the death of their ally the Pope; some wished for delay; some, to abandon all thoughts of rebellion; when Procida rose to reproach and encourage them: for whether the new Pope were for or against them, forces would now no longer be wanting: Accardo, whom he presented to them, was not here as an idle spectator; here were subsidies from Byzantium; in Aragon, fleets and warriors were ready for the enterprise; what had they then to fear? or why did they enter into conspiracies with such women's hearts? Besides they were now too deeply involved to hope for safety in mere passive inactivity: the plot would be known, and they would die like dogs. With such taunts and arguments he urged them on till the arrangements were finally concluded. He proceeded thence to Aragon; presented the Greek

ambassador and his gold to Peter, and combated the reviving fears of the king. The armament was then hastened, and the time and manner determined for Sicily to rise in vengeance against her oppressors.<sup>1</sup>

Such is the account of the conspiracy which is affirmed to have been carried on for two or three years. The particulars I neither affirm nor deny, having no sufficient grounds, but I do not think them probable. That some treaty was conducted between Peter and Michael Paleologus, having for its object to wrest Sicily from Charles, I consider as certain, from the subsequent words and acts of Pope Martin against both of them; and also because Ptolemy of Lucca asserts that he himself saw the agreement, and that it was negotiated by John of Procida, Benedetto Zaccaria of Genoa, and other Genoese citizens, like him established in the dominions of Michael; also that the latter had furnished funds to the King of Aragon.<sup>2</sup> The machinations with some Sicilian

<sup>1</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 57, 59, 60. Ricordano Malespini, ch. 206—208. Cron. anonima della Cospirazione di Procida, *loc. cit.* pp. 249—263. Ferreto Vicentino, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. ix. pp. 952, 953. Chronicle of Frate Francesco Pipino, book iii. ch. 11, 12, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. ix. p. 686.

<sup>2</sup> Ptolemy of Lucca, book xxiv. ch. 4, in Muratori, R. I. S.



barons, not confirmed, I repeat, by any valid historical testimony, appear to me probable, but not certain. But that these practices, conducted with such strict secrecy, succeeded in producing the outbreak of the Vespers at the specified day and hour, is false; because these compilers of the conspiracy have inserted into it fables fit only for a romance, and have fallen into a hundred obvious errors; because the results do not agree with the cause assigned; and because the historians of greater authority, are silent on the subject, as we shall have occasion to state in the next chapter, and still more fully in the Appendix. When carefully sifted, the contemporary records amount to this; that Peter eagerly aspired to the crown of Sicily: that he armed himself: that he treated for subsidies with the Emperor of Constantinople, whose power was threatened by Charles: that Procida was one of his messengers: that he may,

vol. xi. pp. 1186, 1187. Pachymer, book vi. ch. 8, speaks of a great depreciation in the gold coinage decreed at this time by Michael Paleologus, in order to furnish subsidies to the *Italians*. That the Genoese interfered much in his favour, is attested by Caffari in the annals of Genoa, Muratori, R. I. S. vol. vi. p. 576, where it is stated that the Genoese sent a galley to Michael Paleologus, on purpose to apprise him of the warlike preparations of Charles.

perhaps have conspired with some few Sicilian barons, but that their plans were not yet matured nor their preparations completed, when the people of Sicily broke forth. Having stated this, I now resume the thread of the history, unbroken by the obscurity of those doubtful particulars, which had little or no effect upon the revolution.

The preparations of the King of Aragon became known before the death of Nicholas III. Both his own ports and those of Majorca were in full activity, building and equipping galleys and transports, manufacturing arms, collecting provisions, and enrolling seamen ; while a year's pay was promised to any one willing to fight either on horseback or on foot ; so that, in spite of Peter's efforts to proceed quietly, the report of these preparations spread far and wide. The Moors of Spain and Africa, accustomed to the assaults of the Aragonese, fortified themselves to the best of their power ; nor were the Christian princes without suspicion ; and amongst these Charles of Anjou was one of the first to recollect the necessity of defending himself, not only in his Italian but in his Provençal dominions, which were equally oppressed, nearer to Spain, and had already



in former times been attacked by the Catalans.<sup>1</sup> Charles was at this time preparing his already mentioned expedition against Syria; but did not, therefore, neglect to provide himself at home with naval forces to defend his coasts, while in Sicily he increased the munitions of the royal fortresses to more than double.<sup>2</sup> Meantime, being desirous to know the intentions of the King of Aragon, he wrote to Philip of France, who, both by letters and messengers, inquired of Peter in a friendly manner the object of this vast armament; offering him assistance in men and money if it were directed against the infidels. Peter answered evasively that the results would show against whom it was aimed, which was certainly neither the King of France nor his allies: that until then it would be known to no one; and that as he carried on his preparations without the help of any, none could be offended at his silence. He returned similar answers to the inquiries of his

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* pp. 342—345. Montaner, *ch.* 44—47.

<sup>2</sup> These preparations are passed over in silence by contemporary historians, who, on the contrary, accuse Charles of contempt for his danger; but they are proved by his Chancery Registers, and by diplomas, one of the 13th March, and the other of the 6th August, 1278, in the Royal Archives of Naples.

brother the King of Majorca, of the King of Castile, and of the King of England.<sup>1</sup> In vain Philip pressed him still more closely, even sending him money in the supposition that the intended expedition might be against the Moors;<sup>2</sup> and therefore the King of Sicily, still in doubt as to the event, sent his son Charles Prince of Salerno, into Provence, nominally to collect soldiers for the East, but in reality that he might be nearer at hand to watch the proceedings of the King of Aragon and to defend the country.<sup>3</sup>

It was at this period that fortune for the last time smiled upon Charles. Amidst his suspicions of Peter, his anger against Paleologus, and his vexation at the enmity of the Pope, the latter expired, in the year 1280. He could now breathe freely, and if on the death of Gregory he had risked much in order to govern the conclave, he now, without pause or hesitation, adopted the most desperate measures for that purpose. He stirred up the people of Viterbo to rise and drag from it three cardinals of the house of Orsini. He

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 342—345. Montaner, ch. 44—47.

<sup>2</sup> Ric. Malespini, ch. 203. Cron. Sic. of the Conspiracy of Procida, p. 261.

<sup>3</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 345.

strictly confined the remainder, depriving them of all food except bread and water;<sup>1</sup> and possibly, as in a previous election, he may have caused other provisions to be secretly conveyed to the French cardinals, in order that they might hold out the more firmly against the wishes of the Italian party.<sup>2</sup> By these arts, in February 1281, Martin IV., a Frenchman, was raised to the pontificate as the tool of Charles; and as the latter now held in his hands not only the power of his own kingdom, but also the boundless authority of the Holy See, great events might be anticipated. The fury of the Guelf party instantly blazed up throughout Italy; the Pope entrusted all the governments of Romagna to French officials; again appointed Charles Senator of Rome; and seconded his ambition by a cruel persecution of the Ghibelines.<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile he showed a stern countenance to Peter; and when the orators sent by the latter to compliment him

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 346. Ric. Malespini, ch. 207, and the other contemporaries cited by Muratori, Ann. d'Italia, 1281.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. lib. vi.

<sup>3</sup> Chron. Mon. S. Bertini in Martene and Durand, Thes. Anecd. vol. iii. p. 762. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 349, 351. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 58.

on his accession, solicited the honours of canonization for a holy Spanish monk, Raymond of Pegnaforte, dropping at the same time some hints touching the rights of Queen Constance to the kingdom of Sicily, Martin replied roughly, that Peter had no act of favour to expect from the Holy See until he should have paid the tribute due to her, to which the Roman Court laid claim ; interpreting a pious pilgrimage to Rome, performed by one of the early kings of Aragon, into an act of feudal homage.<sup>1</sup>

Not long after, Martin, in pursuance of a new system, appeared more favourably disposed ; and sent one Brother Jacopo, of the preaching friars, to Peter, to demand, in a tone between authority and kindness, an explanation of his secret designs ; to prohibit any hostile act against Christian princes ; and on the other hand, to proffer benedictions, and subsidies against the infidels. But Peter, combining secrecy with truth, thanked him, and returned for answer a request that he would be pleased to pray to God for the success of the enterprise, but not to

<sup>1</sup> Zurita, *Annali d'Aragona*, book iv. ch. 13, 16.

inquire its object. "I hold this secret in such estimation," concluded he, "that if it were known to my left hand, I would cut it off with my right." This obstinate silence increased the suspicions of the French; but Charles, who now regarded himself as second in power to God alone, did not long dwell upon them, and vented his anger in proud words. He knew Peter to be false and treacherous; but if this profound secresy were aimed at him, he would have the King of Aragon to know that he, Charles of Anjou, cared neither for so small a kingdom, nor for so beggarly a prince.<sup>1</sup>

Greece, the object of his ambition for ten years, he now looked upon as already his; he declared war and assumed the Cross; "The cross of the thief," exclaims Bartholomew of Neocastro, "not that of Christ!"<sup>2</sup> The Pope assisted him with excommunications and with money; the former directed against Paleologus and the Greeks hardened in schism; the latter taken from the

<sup>1</sup> Cron. Sic. della Cospirazione di Procida, p. 262. Ric. Malespini, ch. 208. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 60. Montaner, ch. 42, with some slight differences.

<sup>2</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 13.

ecclesiastical tithes, under pretext that the forces of the king were piously destined for the reconquest of the Holy Land."<sup>1</sup> He was joined by the Venetians, from the natural ambition of a mercantile people to recover possession of those regions so favourable to commerce; they furnished a fleet, and stipulated for a division of conquests.<sup>2</sup> Sicily and Apulia in the meanwhile swarmed with warriors, and rang with warlike preparations. Immense supplies of materials were collected in the arsenal of Messina, and in other ports of the island, and of the mainland; the skilful artificers of Messina and Palermo laboured at the manufacture of armour and weapons; the herds of the Val di Mazzara were thinned to furnish the ranks of the cavalry; and munitions of all kinds were every where in preparation.<sup>3</sup> A hundred galleys, two hundred transports, and numerous other vessels, were in course of equipment. About ten thousand horse, and a countless host of infantry,

<sup>1</sup> Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1281, § 25, and 1282, §§ 5, 8—10. See also the note of Mansi, at § 13. Ptolemy of Lucca in Muratori, *R. I. S.* vol. xi. p. 1186.

<sup>2</sup> *Gita Villani*, book vii. ch. 57. Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 350.

<sup>3</sup> *Saba Malaspina*, *idem.*



were in training for the contest, under the banners of forty counts.<sup>1</sup> Paleologus would be able to defend himself but feebly; Constantinople, the Morea, the whole empire, would be occupied; the kingdoms of Albania and Jerusalem would no longer be titular only. And these were no baseless visions in which Charles indulged; he imagined Italy divided between himself and the Pope, and the sword of Belisarius and the sceptre of Justinian glittering in his grasp.

But Italy, the ground-work of these vast designs, was already failing him. I speak of the country as a whole, from Lilibeum to the Alps, because every where the feeling was the same. The municipal patriotism which at once so greatly served and injured Italy, was by its very nature adverse to all foreign dominion, and tended to destroy it after it had been introduced by the interest of a faction. The Guelfs and Ghibelines themselves, while struggling against the nation opposed to their party, had not much confidence in that with which they were allied; and, like them, the Court of Rome had called in the French for no other

<sup>1</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 57. Ric. Malespini, ch. 206. Cron. Sic. della Cospirazione di Procida, p. 251.

purpose than that of governing Italy by their means. Thus amid all the tumult of municipal and party conflicts, and of those passions which agitated even the pontifical throne, the voice of national feeling whispered secretly in every heart. Unity of race, climate, customs, geographical position, Roman law, Latin letters, glorious historical traditions, all served to foster this feeling, which cannot be overlooked or mistaken in mediæval Italy, and which was a source of lofty hope, for the Italians felt that they equalled the surrounding nations in courage, and far surpassed them in civilization. The loftiest intellects therefore deemed that, were the forces of Italy united, she might recover not only independence, but perhaps even all the glory of ancient Rome ; and they sought various means of solving the problem. Nicholas III. projected four Italian kingdoms ; Dante, shortly after, aspired to the restoration of the Roman Empire, under sovereigns of Teutonic race. But little later, Nicholas di Rienzo undertook the regeneration of the Republic at the Capitol, and Petrarch's powerful verse exalted the enterprise. Nor was the ambition of those greater minds wanting in the mass, in which,



at the time of the Lombard league, it had spread rapidly under colour of Guelf partisanship against the German race. Its whole energy was now turned against the French, whom Charles of Anjou had established in Sicily and Apulia and in many other parts of Italy, giving occasion to contrast of manners, envy of privileges, insolence on the one side, intolerance on the other, and arousing the pride of both nations thus brought into contact. The national antagonism was strengthened on the one hand by the measured resistance of Gregory X. and the ardent zeal of Nicholas III., on the other, by the ambition of Charles and the connivance of Martin. This new feeling had, in some degree, a tendency towards Ghibelinism, and both had momentarily the same object; but it was far greater, purer, and more noble. It withdrew Dante from the Guelf interest, for in it he found a name as different as was its spirit from that of the Ghibelines. The two nations distinguished each other by the ancient designation of Latins and Gauls; and revived all the enmity of the days of Brennus, even when it happened that amid the conflicting political relations of so many petty

states, both were fighting under the same Guelfic banner.

This national Latin feeling is clearly discernible both in the events of the time and in the writings of the Sicilian historians. It was this which, in the first siege of Messina, in the midst of the general assault by the Angevin army composed of a mixed multitude of French and inhabitants of the kingdom of Naples and other provinces of Italy, induced the Messinese to spare the Italian bands, which no doubt on their side showed equal forbearance. We also see Peter of Aragon, comprehending the political advantage of this Latin nationality, restore the Italian prisoners to liberty. We see the people of Calabria and Apulia struggle for years to follow the example of the Sicilian revolution. Nor will I quote the words of other writers who are already well known, and whose authority will be frequently alleged in the course of this history; but those of the Remonstrance of the Sicilians, in reply to the first bull of Pope Martin admonishing them to resume the yoke, are so significant and so much to the purpose as to deserve especial mention, for the pride of Italian nationality animates and

inspires the whole of this epistle, which was addressed to the College of Cardinals as if to the Senate of Rome. It reproaches them with the favour shown by them to the French against the Italians; it compares in detail the manners and customs of the two nations; it accuses the strangers of the badness of their climate, of the barbarism of the neighbouring nations, of sensuality, of drunkenness, of gluttony, of all the faults, in short, that they had, and that they had not. It dwells, on the other hand, with complacency on the twofold nobility of the Italian race—thus alluding to its Etruscan and Trojan, or Roman and Greek origin—on the prudence, and dignity, the quickness of intellect and serenity of countenance, and, with manifest error, also on the spirit of toleration, which mark the Italian character. It calls to its aid Lucretia, Virginius, and Scipio; and tauntingly counsels the French to imitate rather the rugged nations of the north, than the civilization, moderation, and liberty of the Italians; showing that although fate may bestow kingdoms, it is virtue which maintains them, and that more is to be gained by wisdom than by force. This epistle reproaches with equal asperity

the Angevin governments of Sicily, Naples, and Romagna: alludes to the Vespers with a boast that the strangers had not ravaged the plains of Italy with impunity; and addresses the Pope with this vehement exclamation: "Father! Italy regards all foreign domination with abhorrence." The author has sullied his noble theme with all the arrogance and ferocity of the Quirites, mixing with his just defence of the revolution an apology for horrors which he ought to have condemned; but this only affords the stronger evidence how widely the Latin feeling was diffused throughout Italy.<sup>1</sup>

That this national antagonism was reciprocal, is confirmed, amongst many other proofs, by the words of William l'Estendard, Charles's vicar in Rome; who shortly before 1282, on hearing a Roman noble deplore the miserable condition of his country, did not blush to reply boldly, throwing aside the mask of tyranny,—that he need not imagine it grieved the king to see that turbulent people worn out and scattered, and Rome reduced to a village.<sup>2</sup> At that very time a quarrel having

<sup>1</sup> Docum. at the end of the work.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 352.

arisen at Orvieto between the French and Latins, rose to a tumult; cries of "Death to the French" were heard; and Ranieri, captain of the city, impelled by national animosity rather than regard for the duties of his office, found some pretext for refusing to interfere.<sup>1</sup> Not long after, near upon two thousand French fell at Forlì—it is not clearly ascertained whether by a stratagem of war, or by an act of premeditated vengeance; in either case this massacre was evidently the result of hatred deeper than is engendered in honourable warfare; and the very fables which attributed it to Guido Bonati, a philosopher and astrologer, serve to show the excited state of public opinion. The animosity of race had penetrated even into the most secret counsels of the Roman court, notwithstanding the age, prudence, and dignity of the members of the sacred College, who were divided now no longer into Guelfs and Ghibelines, but into Latins and French. These parties struggled against each other at the papal elections, and before that of Martin the contest had gone so far, that, but for the forcible interposition of

<sup>1</sup> Nangis, in Duchesne, *Hist. Fr. Script.* vol. v. p. 357, etc. Muratori, *Ann. d'Italia*, 1282.

Charles, Nicholas III. would have had for his successor some other equally zealous Latin. Under the pontificate of Nicholas the Papal court had launched forth into open invective against the French. Amongst others one Bertrando, archbishop of Cosenza, a man of letters, upright and experienced in the ways of the world, after severely blaming the abuses committed by Charles's followers, proceeded on one occasion to predict their extermination. "He who lives long enough," said Bertrando, "shall see adversaries of abject condition rise up against these proud oppressors, expel them from the kingdom, and destroy their dominion; and the time will come when he who slays a Frenchman will deem that he is offering a pleasing sacrifice to God."<sup>1</sup> Thus the policy of Rome either foresaw or accelerated the transition from thoughts to deeds of vengeance. These thoughts were common to the whole of Italy, but peculiar circumstances caused them to burst forth in Sicily in the revolution of the Vespers.

Extortion and oppression increased with the

<sup>1</sup> Muratori, *Ann. d'Italia*, 1282.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* pp. 338, 339.



progress of the preparations for war against Greece, and with them in a far greater degree the discontent and disaffection of the people. The nobles were compelled to furnish, not only their feudal contingent of troops, but also the vessels required; and if any one delayed to do so his possessions were seized; while nobles and vassals, those who owed military service, and those who did not, were alike forcibly compelled to join the ranks of the army. Hence arose a cry of despair throughout Sicily; the people complained that they were compelled to make war against their Greek allies, for the pleasure of their French oppressors; they murmured at the scanty stipend they received for three months only, which would be exhausted before they could reach Romania, without even leaving sufficient for the maintenance of their families in Sicily. They detested the expedition; but they feared the king. "Let us fly," they exclaimed, "let us fly from our dwellings and conceal ourselves in woods and caves, where our lives will be less miserable; or rather let us fly from Sicily, which is become a land of poverty, suffering, and shame. The children of Israel under Pharaoh were not more

enslaved than we; and they roused themselves and burst their chains! We too hear traditions of the glories of our ancestors; but we are a vile, bastard race, enervated by vices and divisions; the most abject among the nations of Christendom!"<sup>1</sup>

Those who considered themselves superior to the impetuous mass of the people, being not yet undeceived by experience, once more reverted to the ignoble resource of complaint. They addressed themselves to the Pope, notwithstanding the hostility of the Sicilians against the Court of Rome, which was greater than that of any other Christian people, although they never swerved from the faith. This hostility was so great that the French used to call the Sicilians *paterini*<sup>2</sup> as a

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 350, 351.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 355. Anonymi Chr. Sic. *loc. cit.* p. 147. The laws of the Emperor Frederick against heresy, preserve the names of about twenty different heretical sects; amongst which are the *paterini*. In a diploma of his given in Padua, the 22d February, twelfth indiction, the origin of the term *paterini* is thus explained:—"Horum sectæ veteribus vel ne in publicum prodeant non sunt notatæ nominibus, vel quod est forte nefandius, non contentu, ut vel ab Arrio Arriani, vel a Nestorio Nestoriani, aut a similibus similes nuncupantur; sed in exemplum martyrum qui pro fide Catholica martiria subierunt, Patarenos se nominant, velut expositos passioni." In Luke Wadding, Ann. Minorum, vol. iii. p. 340, § 13.



term of reproach ; and it is no less clearly exhibited in the Sicilian writings of those times, in which when touching on the Court of Rome, the usually rude style becomes animated by a sudden fire, sparkling with scriptural imagery, and echoing the bitter words of the Ghibeline poet. This arose partly from the feeling universal throughout Italy, and from the cultivation of letters, in which the Sicilians under the Suabian dynasty excelled all the other Italian nations ;<sup>1</sup> partly also from the independence of our earlier sovereigns of the Holy See ; from their frequent contests with the papacy and contempt of its censures ; from the vicissitudes of the Republic of 1254, called into existence by the Popes and then abandoned by them ; lastly, from the onerous gift bestowed upon them in the person of their Angevin King. Nevertheless, as he, being a usurper, recognised the feudal supremacy of the Pope, and as religion was regarded in those days rather as a terrific phantasm than as a covenant of justice and of peace, the Sicilians deemed that the Pontiff, as their pastor and suzerain, could alone repair their wrongs. Hence it was that in the outbreak of

<sup>1</sup> Dante Alighieri, *De Vulgari Eloquentia*, book i. ch. 12.

the Vespers the name of the Church was used as a war-cry; and hence also two priests, chosen from the wisest and most venerable of the kingdom, came as suppliants to the feet of the French Pope Martin in the name of the whole Sicilian nation. These were Bartholomew Bishop of Patti, and Brother Bongiovanni of the preaching friars. They fulfilled with zeal and courage the mission entrusted to them by credulous misery. They made an oration at the papal Court in the presence of Charles. "Have mercy upon me," began Bartholomew, "have mercy upon me, thou Son of David, for my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil;" and amid tears and reproaches he recapitulated the whole of the lamentable history. It is needless to say that Martin turned a deaf ear, and Charles dissembled; but, as the two orators left the palace, they were surrounded by the myrmidons of the latter, and dragged to prison, where the friar long and severely expiated his patriotic zeal. The Bishop corrupted his gaolers and escaped.<sup>1</sup>

Nothing daunted by this violence, he returned to Messina, where the people listened with tears

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 3.

of rage to the narrative of his adventures. Meanwhile all who came from Naples stated that the indignation of the king had been roused to the highest pitch by the mission to the Pope, and by the contumacious opposition to the Greek war; and that he would turn his assembled army against Sicily, exterminate its disaffected and never-satisfied inhabitants, bestow the land on others, and make of it a foreign colony.<sup>1</sup> These reports, spread by the boastful folly of the courtiers, or the fears of the oppressed people, served at least as a standard by which to measure their hate, which, owing to the common suffering and common wishes throughout Sicily, had swallowed up all minor animosities between cities and families, vassals and their Sicilian lords. The few who still adhered to the king rather served to increase the detestation in which he was held than to add to his strength. The priesthood followed, or perhaps led, the public feeling, as is manifest from the mission of Bartholomew and Bongiovanni, and from the zeal which they showed throughout the whole course of the revolution, in defiance of repeated papal excommunications,

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 13. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 3.

The Sicilian nobles, few and oppressed, unable to form a party of their own, swelled that of the people ; and those, if any there were, who were the accomplices of Peter of Aragon, fomented disaffection and held out faint gleams of hope. The universal discontent, confounding the persons of the rulers with the principles of their government, augmented the strength and numbers of the popular party to so unusual a degree, as to excite in Sicily, which still retained in a great measure its feudal institutions, all the passions of the most democratic states of Italy. They recalled the times of William the Good, days of liberty, peace and plenty. They deplored the departed Republic of 1254, and painted in the brightest colours of the imagination, tinctured by envy, the happy condition of the Italian cities, without sovereigns, feudataries, or French oppressors. Nor was it poverty, the exactions imposed upon their persons and property, and the fear of still greater sufferings, which alone goaded them on ; but, above all, jealousy of their women, snatched from them by the strangers by force, or purchase, or by the seductions of vanity and prosperity.

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Besides all this, in every heart was engraven the image of Charles, aged and stern, cruel and rapacious, reckless of every right, however sacred, and the deadly enemy of Sicily. Sixteen years of constant exposure to violence had operated powerfully on the energetic character of the Sicilian people, and had completely changed its tone. From having been joyous it became gloomy; the banquet, the song, and the dance were neglected, and (as the Sicilians afterwards wrote to Pope Martin) "their harps hung silent on the branches of the wild fig and the unfruitful willow." "Every pulse throbbed with fear," writes another remonstrance of this unhappy people; "the days passed in doubt, the nights in anxiety. Even their dreams were troubled by the threatening aspect of their oppressors. They could neither live nor even die in peace." Their poetical ardour gave place to gloomy meditation, to sadness and shame, to profound hatred and burning thirst for vengeance; fierce passions, which spread from those who suffered injury, to those who only witnessed it; from the eager to the slothful; from the fiery to the meek; from the daring to the cowardly; through every age, rank and sex.

Private emotions, private interests, were silenced for the time, or contributed to swell the tide of popular feeling, more powerful than any conspiracy, because it mocks the suspicious watchfulness of rulers, and a hundred-fold exceeds their power.<sup>1</sup> Under such auspices was the year 1282 ushered in in Sicily. Some chroniclers, pandering to the popular love of the marvellous, have recorded, that in February, during Pope Martin's residence at Orvieto, a seal was taken on the coast of Montalto, and brought as a new species of wild beast to the papal Court, where its lowings were so wild and lamentable as to infuse terror into all who heard them. And after the subsequent events in Sicily, none doubted that this marine monster had been sent to warn the Pope of impending calamity.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 2, 4. Epistle of the Sicilians to Pope Martin, in the Anonymi Chr. Sic. ch. 40. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 13. Document at the end of the work.

<sup>2</sup> Life of Martin IV. in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. iii. p. 609. MSS. of the victory of Charles of Anjou, in Duchesne, Hist. Fr. Script. vol. v. p. 851. Chron. of the Monastery of San Bert. in Martene and Durand, Thes. Anecd. vol. iii. p. 762. Francesco Pipino, Chron. book iv. ch. 29, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. ix.

## CHAPTER VI.

NEW OUTRAGES COMMITTED BY THE FRENCH IN PALERMO.—FESTIVAL AT SANTO SPIRITO ON THE 31ST OF MARCH.—TUMULT.—SAVAGE MASSACRE THROUGHOUT THE CITY.—PROCLAMATION OF THE REPUBLIC.—RISING OF THE NEIGHBOURING TOWNS.—ASSEMBLY AT PALERMO, AND DARING MEASURES ADOPTED BY IT.—LETTERS OF THE PALERMITANS TO THE MESSINESE, WHO JOIN IN THE REVOLUTION.—FORM OF GOVERNMENT ADOPTED IN SICILY, AND PREPARATIONS FOR DEFENCE.—OPINION AS TO THE IMMEDIATE CAUSE OF THE REVOLUTION.—FROM MARCH TO JUNE, 1282.

THE Sicilians endured the yoke, though cursing it, until the spring of 1282. The King of Aragon's military preparations were not yet completed, nor, even if partially known in Sicily, could they inspire any immediate hope. The people were overawed by Charles's immense armaments destined against Constantinople; and forty-two royal castles, either in the principal cities, or in situations of great natural strength, served to keep the island in check. A still greater number were held by French feudataries; the standing troops were collected and in arms; and the feudal militia, composed in great part of foreign sub-

feudataries, waited only the signal to assemble. In such a posture of affairs, which the foresight of the prudent would never have selected for an outbreak, the officers of Charles continued to grind down the Sicilian people, satisfied that their patience would endure for ever.

New outrages shed a gloom over the festival of Easter at Palermo the ancient capital of the kingdom, detested by the strangers more than any other city, as being the strongest and the most deeply injured. Messina was the seat of the king's viceroy in Sicily, Herbert of Orleans; Palermo was governed by the Justiciary of Val di Mazzara, John of St. Remigio, a minister worthy of Charles. His subalterns, worthy both of the justiciary and of the king, had recently launched out into fresh acts of rapine and violence.<sup>1</sup> But the people submitted. It even went so far that the citizens of Palermo, seeking comfort from God amid their worldly tribulations, and having entered a church to pray, in that very church, on the days sacred to the memory of the Saviour's passion, and amidst the penitential rites, were exposed to the most cruel outrages. The ban-dogs of the exchequer

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 14.



searched out amongst them those who had failed in the payment of the taxes, dragged them forth from the sacred edifice, manacled and bore them to prison, crying out insultingly before the multitude attracted to the spot, "Pay, *paterini*, pay!" And the people still submitted.<sup>1</sup> The Tuesday after Easter, which fell on the 31st of March, there was a festival at the church of Santo Spirito. On that occasion a heinous outrage against the liberties of the Sicilians afforded the impulse, and the patience of the people gave way. We will now record all that the historians most deserving of credence have transmitted to us concerning this memorable event.

Half a mile from the southern wall of the city, on the brink of the ravine of Oreto, stands a church dedicated to the Holy Ghost, concerning which the Latin Fathers have not failed to record, that on the day on which the first stone of it was laid, in the twelfth century, the sun was darkened by an eclipse. On one side of it are the precipice and the river, on the other the plain extending to the city, which in the present day is in great part encumbered with walls and gar-

<sup>1</sup> Anon. Chron. Sic. ch. 33.

dens ; while a square enclosure, of moderate size, shaded by dusky cypresses, honey-combed with tombs, and adorned with urns and other sepulchral monuments, surrounds the church. This is a public cemetery, laid out towards the end of the eighteenth century, and fearfully filled in three weeks by the dire pestilence which devastated Sicily in 1837. On the Tuesday, at the hour of vespers, religion and custom crowded this then cheerful plain, carpeted with the flowers of spring, with citizens wending their way towards the church. Divided into numerous groups, they walked, sate in clusters, spread the tables, or danced upon the grass ; and, whether it were a defect or a merit of the Sicilian character, threw off, for the moment, the recollection of their sufferings ;—when the followers of the Justiciary suddenly appeared amongst them, and every bosom thrilled with a shudder of disgust. The strangers came, with their usual insolent demeanour, as they said, to maintain tranquillity ; and for this purpose they mingled in the groups, joined in the dances, and familiarly accosted the women, pressing the hand of one, taking unwarranted liberties with others ; addressing inde-

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cent words and gestures to those more distant ; until some temperately admonished them to depart, in God's name, without insulting the women, and others murmured angrily ; but the hot-blooded youths raised their voices so fiercely that the soldiers said to one another, " These insolent *paterini* must be armed that they dare thus to answer," and replied to them with the most offensive insults, insisting, with great insolence, on searching them for arms, and even here and there striking them with sticks or thongs. Every heart already throbbed fiercely on either side—when a young woman of singular beauty and of modest and dignified deportment, appeared with her husband and relations bending her steps towards the church. Drouet, a Frenchman, impelled either by insolence or licence, approached her as if to examine her for concealed weapons ; seized her and searched her bosom. She fell fainting into her husband's arms, who, in a voice almost choked with rage, exclaimed, " Death, death to the French !" At the same moment a youth burst from the crowd which had gathered round them, sprang upon Drouet, disarmed and slew

him ; and probably at the same moment paid the penalty of his own life, leaving his name unknown, and the mystery for ever unsolved, whether it were love for the injured woman, the impulse of a generous heart, or the more exalted flame of patriotism, that prompted him thus to give the signal of deliverance. Noble examples have a power far beyond that of argument or eloquence to rouse the people—and the abject slaves awoke at length from their long bondage. “ Death, death to the French ! ” they cried ; and the cry, say the historians of the time, re-echoed like the voice of God through the whole country, and found an answer in every heart. Above the corpse of Drouet were heaped those of victims slain on either side ; the crowd expanded itself, closed in, and swayed hither and thither in wild confusion ; the Sicilians, with sticks, stones, and knives, rushed with desperate ferocity upon their fully-armed opponents ; they sought for them and hunted them down ; fearful tragedies were enacted amid the preparations for festivity, and the overthrown tables were drenched in blood. The people displayed their strength, and conquered.

The struggle was brief, and great the slaughter of the Sicilians; but of the French there were two hundred—and two hundred fell.<sup>1</sup>

Breathless, covered with blood, brandishing the plundered weapons, and proclaiming the insult and its vengeance, the insurgents rushed towards the tranquil city. "Death to the French!" they shouted, and as many as they found were put to the sword. The example, the words, the contagion of passion, in an instant aroused the whole people. In the heat of the tumult Roger Mastrangelo, a nobleman, was chosen, or constituted himself their leader. The multitude continued to increase; dividing into troops they scoured the streets, burst open doors, searched every nook, every hiding-place, and shouting "Death to the French!" smote them and slew them, while those too distant to strike added to the tumult by their applause. On the outbreak of this sudden uproar

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 4. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 14. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 354. Montaner, ch. 43. D'Esclot, ch. 81. Genoese Annals in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. vi. p. 576. Giachetto Malespini, ch. 209. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 61. Anon. Chronicle of the Conspiracy of Procida, *loc. cit.* p. 264. Speciale describes the insult of the Frenchman differently and in terms somewhat too clear. See also the other contemporaries quoted in the Appendix.

the Justiciary had taken refuge in his strong palace; the next moment it was surrounded by an enraged multitude, crying aloud for his death; they demolished the defences, and rushed furiously in, but the Justiciary escaped them; favoured by the confusion and the closing darkness, he succeeded, though wounded in the face, in mounting his horse unobserved, with only two attendants, and fled with all speed. Meanwhile the slaughter continued with increased ferocity; even the darkness of night failed to arrest it, and it was resumed on the morrow more furiously than ever; nor did it cease at length because the thirst for vengeance was slaked, but because victims were wanting to appease it.<sup>1</sup> Two thousand French perished in this first outbreak.<sup>2</sup> Even Christian burial was denied them,<sup>3</sup> but pits were afterwards dug to receive their despised remains;<sup>4</sup> and tradition still points out a column surmounted by an iron cross, raised by compassionate piety on one of those spots, pro-

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 14, 15. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 355. See the places already quoted in Montaner and d'Escot. The Palace of Palermo was an important fortress.

<sup>2</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 22. The Anonymous Chronicle says three thousand, p. 265.

<sup>3</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 15.

<sup>4</sup> Fazello, History of Sicily, decad. ii. book viii. ch. 4.

bably long after the perpetration of the deed of vengeance. Tradition, moreover, relates that the sound of a word, like the *Shibboleth* of the Hebrews, was the cruel test by which the French were distinguished in the massacre; and that, if there were found a suspicious or unknown person, he was compelled, with a sword to his throat, to pronounce the word *ciciri*, and the slightest foreign accent was the signal of his death. Forgetful of their own character, and as if stricken by fate, the gallant warriors of France neither fled, nor united, nor defended themselves; they unsheathed their swords, and presented them to their assailants, imploring, as if in emulation of each other, to be the first to die: of one common soldier only is it recorded, that having concealed himself behind a wainscot, and being dislodged at the sword's point, he resolved not to die unavenged, and springing with a wild cry upon the ranks of his enemies, slew three of them before he himself perished.<sup>1</sup> The insurgents broke into the convents of the Minorites and Preaching Friars, and slaughtered all the monks whom they recognised

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 355.

as French.<sup>1</sup> Even the altars afforded no protection; tears and prayers were alike unheeded; neither old men, women, nor infants were spared; the ruthless avengers of the ruthless massacre of Agosta swore to root out the seed of the French oppressors throughout the whole of Sicily; and this vow they cruelly fulfilled, slaughtering infants at their mothers' breasts, and after them the mothers themselves, not sparing even pregnant women, but, with a horrible refinement of cruelty, ripping up the bodies of Sicilian women who were with child by French husbands, and dashing against the stones the fruit of the mingled blood of the oppressors and the oppressed.<sup>1</sup> This general massacre of all who spoke the same language, and these heinous acts of cruelty, have caused the

<sup>1</sup> Anonymous Chronicle of the Conspiracy of Procida, p. 264. We read, "Andaru a li lochi di frati minuri, e frati predicaturi, e quanti ci ndi truvàru chi parlassiru en la lingua francisca li anciseru 'ntra li clesii." This agrees with the tradition of the slaughter of all those who spoke with a foreign accent.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 355, 356. Anon. Chron. p. 265. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 14. Chron. S. Bert. in Martene and Durand, Anec. vol. iii. p. 762. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 61. Ricobaldo Ferrarese, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. ix. p. 142. Franc. Pipino, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. ix. p. 686. Giacchetto Malespini, ch. 209. And the others quoted in the Appendix.



Sicilian Vespers to be classed amongst the most infamous of national crimes. But these fill a vast volume, and in it all nations have inscribed horrors of a similar, and sometimes of a blacker dye; nations often more civilized, and in times less rude, and not only in the assertion of their liberty or against foreign tyrants, but in the delirium of civil or religious partisanship, against fellow-citizens, against brothers, against innocent and helpless beings, whom they destroyed by thousands, sweeping away whole populations. Therefore I do not blush for my country at the remembrance of the Vespers, but bewail the dire necessity which drove Sicily to such extremities—bleeding and tortured, consumed by hunger, trampled under foot, and insulted in all that she held most precious; and I bewail the fallen nature of man endowed with reason, and made in the image of God, who covets every blessing enjoyed by his neighbour, and seeks to tyrannize over his every passion and feeling; who is ready in aggression, ferocious in revenge, and in its pursuit casts aside every restraint, if he can but find a shadow of right wherewith to excuse himself—for such is the

case in all feuds, political or religious, between individuals, families, classes, or nations.

The very atrocity of the Vespers proved the salvation of Sicily, by cutting off all possibility of compromise. On that same blood-stained night of the 31st of March, the people of Palermo assembled in parliament, and divided between the triumph of vengeance and terror at their own daring act, advanced still more decidedly in the path they had chosen; they abolished monarchy, and resolved on establishing a commonwealth, under the protection of the Church of Rome. They were moved to this determination by deadly hatred against Charles and his government, and recollection of the stern rule of the Suabian dynasty on the one hand, and, on the other, by grateful remembrance of the liberty enjoyed in 1254, by the example of the Tuscan and Lombard Republics, and by the natural pride of a powerful city, which, having freed itself from a detested yoke, confided in its own strength. The name of the Church was added, in order to disarm the wrath of the Pope, to tempt his ambition, or to justify the rebellion, under pretext that, in driving

out their more immediate but criminal ruler, they contemplated no infraction of loyalty to the suzerain from whom he held his power. Roger Mastrangelo, Henry Barresi, and Niccoloso of Ortoleva, knights, and Niccolo of Ebdemonia, were proclaimed captains of the people, with five counsellors. By the glare of torchlight, on the bloody ground, amid the noise and throng of the armed multitude, and with all the sublime pomp of tumult, the republican magistrates were inaugurated; trumpets and Moorish kettle-drums sounded, and thousands upon thousands of voices uttered the joyous cry of "The Republic and Liberty." The ancient banner of the city, a golden eagle in a red field, was unfolded to reap new glories; and in homage to the Church the keys of St. Peter were quartered with it.<sup>1</sup>

At midnight, John of St. Remigio stayed his rapid flight at Vicari, a castle thirty miles distant from the capital; where, knocking loudly and hurriedly, he was with difficulty recognised by the garrison, half drunk from the celebration of the same festival which had bred so fearful a slaughter

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. xiv. Anon. Chron. Sic. p. 147. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 4.

in Palermo ; and who, having admitted him, were transfixed with amazement at seeing their justiciary arrive at so unreasonable an hour, unescorted, breathless, and covered with blood. John refused all explanation at the time, but the next morning, at daybreak, he called to arms all the French of the neighbourhood, a feudal militia well inured to warfare, and breaking silence, he urged them to resist, and perhaps to avenge the fate of their comrades. It was not long before the forces of Palermo, which had set out at dawn in pursuit of the fugitive, whose traces they had discovered, arrived at full speed beneath the walls of Vicari, and surrounded the city in disorder, impatient for the assault ; but not perceiving how it was to be made, they had recourse to threats, and demanded immediate surrender, promising to the inhabitants the safety of their persons, and to John and his followers permission, on laying down their arms, to embark for Aigues-Mortes, in Provence. They, however, disdaining such conditions, and regarding the mob of assailants with contempt, made a vigorous sortie. At first military discipline obtained the advantage, and the Sicilians gave way, but the tide of battle

was turned by a power beyond that of human skill, by the spirit which had given birth to the Vespers, and which suddenly blazed up again in the scattered squadrons. They paused—they looked at one another:—"Death—death to the French!" they cried, and rushing upon them with irresistible fury, they drove back the veteran warriors into the fortress, defeated and in confusion. After this, it was in vain that the French proposed terms of surrender. Heedless of the rules of war, the young archers of Caccamo shot the justiciary as he presented himself upon the walls, and seeing him fall, the whole multitude rushed to the assault, occupied the fortress, put the garrison to the sword, and flung their corpses piecemeal to the dogs and to the vultures. This done the host returned to Palermo.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, the fame of what had occurred spread rapidly from town to town, and the first in that neighbourhood to rise was Corleone, as chief in population and importance, and also because of its numerous Lombard inhabitants, who held the names of Angevins and Guelfs in abhorrence, and

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 15.

of the intolerable burdens imposed upon it by the near neighbourhood of the royal farms. This city, afterwards surnamed the Valiant, boldly following the example of the capital, sent William Basso, William Corto, and Guiglionio de Miraldo, as orators to Palermo, to propose terms of alliance and fraternity between the two cities; mutual assistance in arms, forces, and money; reciprocal privileges of citizenship, and enfranchisement from all burdens laid upon such as were not citizens. It is not known whether the idea of the league originated with the republican rulers of Palermo or with the patriots of Corleone; but whichever may have been the case, it clearly exhibits the preponderance in those early days of the municipal tendency, and the exchange of feudal relations for the federal union of communities, the banner under which the revolution spread itself throughout the entire island. The assembled people of Palermo with one voice accepted the terms, and by their desire, on the 3d of April, they were sworn to on the Gospels by the captains and counsellors of the city, with the deputies of Corleone, and officially registered amongst the public acts;

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Palermo binding herself, moreover, to assist her ally in the destruction of the strong fortress of Calata Mauro.

Meanwhile, one Boniface, elected captain of the people of Corleone, went forth with three thousand men to scour the surrounding country. The royal farms were plundered and devastated; the herds, which had been carefully fattened for the army of the East, were confiscated to the service of the Sicilian Revolution; the castles of the French were stormed, their houses sacked, and the massacre so ruthless, that, according to Saba Malaspina, it seemed as if every man either had the death of a father, son, or brother to revenge, or firmly believed that the slaughter of a Frenchman was an act well-pleasing to God.<sup>1</sup> Thus, in a very few days, the movement propagated itself many miles around, owing to the similarity of sentiments, the force of example, and the energy of the insurgents. In many places, too, it assumed a character which must be inexplicable to those who, in spite of all that has been stated above, would persist in regarding these tumultuous outbreaks as the result of conspiracy; for, while the

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 356.

people showed the utmost readiness to put the foreigners to the sword, they yet feared to disown the name of King Charles. Their hesitation, however, lasted but a few days, for they were carried away by the impulse of universal feeling, and by the strength of the rebels ; so that all by degrees declared themselves elected chiefs to lead their forces against the French, and captains of the people whom they sent to the capital, the fame of whose example had roused their courage, and which was now the centre of all their confidence, of all their hopes.

This first nucleus of the representatives of the nation being thus assembled in Palermo, they became imbued with the same valour which in one short night had raised a popular tumult to the dignity of a revolution. They were further encouraged by the manly energy of the people, who, mingled with insurgents from the surrounding towns, traversed the city to and fro, eagerly relating to one another the outrages they had suffered, and crying aloud, "Death rather than the yoke of the French!" So that no sooner were the syndics of the greater part of Val di Mazzara assembled in parliament, than they

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agreed to the establishment of the republican form of government, conducted in the name of the Church. The people without responded with loud acclamations and shouts of "The Republic and Liberty!" All encouraged each other to venture everything, when Roger Mastrangelo, bent on urging them on so far that all retreat should be cut off and that they might be able to controul the course of events, rose, and boldly thus addressed the assembly:—

"Citizens,—I hear daring words and solemn oaths, but I see no symptoms of action, as if the blood that has been shed were the seal of victory rather than the provocation to a long and deadly struggle. Do you know Charles and his thousands of executioners, and can you yet amuse yourselves with the decoration of banners? Not far distant on the mainland are armies and navies ready for the Grecian war: there are the French panting for vengeance, and in a few days they will burst upon us. If they find our ports open for their disembarkation—if our inertness, or our faults, favour their progress, they will soon spread throughout the whole of Sicily, they will subdue the irresolute people by force of arms, deceive

them with reports of our unhappy divisions, seduce them with promises, and drag them back to the shameful yoke of bondage, or drive them to raise their parricidal weapons against ourselves. You have sworn to die or to be free; and you will become slaves, and will not all die, for the butchers will at length be weary, and will reserve the herd of survivors, to exercise upon them their despotic pleasure. Sicilians! remember the days of Conradin. To halt now will be destruction; to pursue our course, glory and deliverance. Our forces are sufficient to raise the whole country as far as Messina, and Messina must not belong to the foe; we share the same origin, the same language, the same past glory and present shame, the same experience that slavery and misery are the result of division. All Sicily is stained with the blood of the strangers; she is strong in the courage of her sons, in the ruggedness of her mountains, in the protection of the seas which are her bulwarks. Who then shall set foot upon her soil, except to find in it a yawning grave? Christ, who preached liberty to mankind, who inspired you to effect this blessed deliverance, now extends to you his Almighty hand, if you

will but act like men in your own defence. Citizens, captains of the people,—it is my counsel that messengers be sent to all the other towns, inviting them to unite with us for the maintenance of the commonwealth, that by force of arms, by daring, and by rapidity of action, we should aid the weak, determine the doubtful, and combat the froward. For this purpose, let us divide into three bands, which may simultaneously traverse the whole island; then let a general parliament mature our counsels, unite our views, and regulate the form of government; for I call God to witness, that Palermo aspires not to dominion, but seeks only liberty for all, and for herself the glory of being foremost in peril.”

“And the people of Corleone,” replied Boniface, “will follow the fortunes of this noble city, the fortress and ornament of Sicily. Corleone sends hither three thousand of her warriors to conquer or to die with you. But if our fate be to perish, let all those perish with us who would take part with the stranger in the day of the deliverance of Sicily. Thou, Roger, valiant in fight and sage in counsel, thou hast spoken words of safety.

Henceforward he who lingers is a traitor to his country; let us arm ourselves and go forth.”<sup>1</sup>

“Forward, forward!” thundered the voice of the people in answer to his words;<sup>2</sup> and with marvellous celerity the messengers were despatched; the forces assembled, and sent forth in three divisions; one to the left, towards Cefalù; one to the right, upon Calatafimi; and the third towards the centre of the island, through Castro Giovanni.<sup>3</sup> They displayed the banner of the commonwealth with the keys of St. Peter depicted around them, and their fame went before them, awakening hope and desire in all hearts. Hence every city and town unhesitatingly renounced its allegiance to Charles, with a degree of unity

<sup>1</sup> These speeches of Roger and Boniface are recorded by Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 356—358; whether in accordance with historic custom, or because he knew them to be correct, is not known. At any rate, I thought it best to preserve them, retrenching many useless sentences, and adding little or nothing of my own.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 358. D’Esclot also speaks of this movement, though recording the particulars with less exactness; but judging wisely of the intention, he says, that the Palermitans reflected that they could not come forth unscathed from the revolution, unless by inducing the whole island to join with them.

<sup>3</sup> Anon. *Chron. Sic.* p. 147.

which was admirable except in regard to the slaughter of the French. They were hunted down in the mountains and forests, assaulted and vanquished in the castles, and pursued with such fury that, even to those who had escaped from the hands of the Sicilians, life became a burden, and from the most impregnable fortresses, from the remotest hiding-places, they gave themselves up into the hands of the people who summoned them to die. Some even precipitated themselves from the towers of their strongholds. A very few, aided either by fortune or by their own valour, escaped with their lives, but were despoiled of every thing, and these sought refuge in Messina.<sup>1</sup> But the fate of William Porcelet merits eternal remembrance. He was lord or governor of Calatafimi, and amid the unbridled iniquity of his countrymen, was distinguished for justice and humanity. On the day of vengeance, in the full flush of its triumphant fury, the Palermitan host appeared at Calatafimi, and not only spared the life of William and of his family, but treated him

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 358. *Nic. Speciale*, book i. ch. 4. The progressive massacre of the French is also recorded by Montaner, ch. 43.

with distinguished honour and sent him back to Provence ; a fact which goes to prove, that for the excesses committed by the people, ample provocation had not been wanting.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile the great object towards which every effort was directed was to gain over Messina to the cause of the Revolution, for all comprehended the importance of her situation, of her seaport, and of the powerful and wealthy city herself obviously marked out as the key-stone of the war, as well as the pressing necessity of obtaining her alliance, or of making a desperate effort to subdue her by force of arms.<sup>2</sup> Some fears were entertained of the sentiments of Messina on the score of ancient animosities ; but there was also ground for hope, in the recent sufferings which had enlarged the hearts of all who shared them, and in the fact that many Messinese resided in Palermo, where they enjoyed the advantages of citizenship, and had formed connexions both social and commercial. Negotiations were therefore commenced ; of those which were private and the most efficacious, no record has been

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 61.



handed down to us ; but of those publicly conducted a letter is still extant, dated from Palermo, the 13th of April, and despatched by messengers to Messina, which begins thus :—"The Palermitans to the noble citizens of the illustrious city of Messina, bondsmen under Pharaoh in dust and mire, greeting, and deliverance from the servile yoke by the arm of liberty. Rise," continues the epistle, "rise, O daughter of Sion, and reassert thy former strength . . . cease thy lamentations, which only awaken contempt ; take thy weapons, thy quiver and thy bow, and unbind the fetters from thy neck." It proceeds to speak of Charles as a Nero, a wolf, a lion, and a ferocious dragon ; then reverting to Messina, it exclaims : "The voice of God says to thee, 'Take up thy bed, and walk,' for thou art whole ;" and again it exhorts her citizens, "to struggle with the old serpent, and being regenerate, like newborn babes to suck the milk of liberty, to seek justice, and to fly from calamity and ignominy."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This epistle is published in the Anon. Chron. Sic. pp. 147—149, in Gregorio's *Bibl. Arag.* vol. ii. in Lünig, *Codex Italise Diplomaticus*, vol. ii. n. 49, but with an erroneous date ; and in several other books. I have thought it best to transcribe this letter at the end of the work, as it is of great importance, both as to sub-

While the Palermitans sought to gain over the citizens by these biblical metaphors, Herbert of Orleans strengthened himself with foreign arms, and with the support of the Messinese nobles, who by abuses and oppression had exalted themselves above their fellow-citizens, and therefore now resolutely sided with the vicar. And first he sent seven Messinese galleys to attack Palermo, under the command of Richard de Riso, who in 1268 had dared with a few vessels to confront the whole Pisan fleet, and who was now to lose in civil war his honour as a citizen and his reputation as a leader; for, uniting with four galleys from Amalfi, under the command of Matthew del Giudice and Roger of Salerno, he proceeded to blockade the port of Palermo, and as he was unable to effect anything else, approaching the walls he caused the name of Charles to be shouted aloud, together with insults and menaces to the citizens. They however, with the long-suffering of conscious strength, replied that "they would

ject and language. It was much esteemed in those days, and is to be found in many collections of letters. Its authenticity is also confirmed by d'Esclot, ch. 81, who gives a paraphrase of it, often in the words of the original, but with an erroneous date, and by other writers.



neither return his insults nor his blows; the Messinese and Palermitans were brothers; the French oppressors their only enemies; and they would do better to turn their arms against the tyrants;" and with these words they hoisted the standard of the cross of Messina upon the walls, beside the eagle of Palermo.<sup>1</sup>

The city of Messina, or rather those who wielded the municipal authority, in order to prove their loyalty, on the 15th of April sent 500 cross-bowmen under the command of Chiriolo, a knight of Messina, to garrison Taormina, and prevent its occupation by the insurgents.<sup>2</sup> The people, on the other hand, felt their Sicilian blood boil, as they received the news of the rising in Palermo and in the other cities, of the progress of the insurgents through the island, and of the slaughter and flight of the French, heightened by many false or exaggerated reports; and when they beheld the fugitives enter Messina, destitute and terror-stricken, they began to murmur and show animosity against the soldiers of Herbert,<sup>3</sup> about 600 French and Calabrian horsemen under

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 15. Anon. Chron. Sic. p. 147,

<sup>2</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 24.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

the command of Peter of Catanzaro, whom the viceroy regarded as so effectual a restraint upon the citizens that they would never be able to throw it off.<sup>1</sup> But the people, knowing this, at length one day broke forth into violent menaces and had nearly proceeded from words to deeds ; and they, feeling themselves no longer safe in the city, withdrew, some to the Castle of Matagrifone, some to the royal palace, where Herbert resided. The latter, in an evil hour, decided on a display of energy ; for what would have subdued a doubtful population, only exasperated a resolute one : he sent ninety horsemen under Michelletto Gatta to occupy the defences of Taormina, as if unable to repose confidence in the Messinese garrison, and the latter, seeing them approach in such arrogant and almost hostile guise, and incited by a citizen named Bartholomew, received them with a cry of insulting defiance, and a shower of arrows. The contest being thus engaged, forty of the French remained on the field ; the rest fled precipitately for refuge to the castle of Scaletta ; and the Sicilians, tearing down the banners of Charles,

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 358.

marched upon Messina to compel her to join the rebellion.

In the city thousands were willing, but none had courage for the work, till a man of the people, Bartholomew Maniscalco by name, conspired with several others to give the signal of action. Meanwhile, forces were preparing to repulse the insurgents from Taormina, and the more prudent of the citizens deplored the impending effusion of the blood of their brethren. The people were on the alert,<sup>1</sup> nor did the conspirators hold back. Perhaps the entrance into the port of a Palermitan galley, and the slaughter by her crew of a few French who had fallen into their hands, hastened the event ;<sup>2</sup> but, in similar conflagrations, it rarely happens that we can trace the origin of the first spark. It was the 28th of April, when from the bosom of the tumultuous crowd broke forth the cries of "Death to the French, death to those who side with them !" and the massacre commenced. The victims, however, were but few, as the previous threatening aspect of the people had cleared the city of the greater number of the French. Maniscalco meanwhile, with his con-

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 24.      <sup>2</sup> Anon. Chron. Sic. p. 147.

federates, hoisted the cross of Messina in the place of the detested banner of Anjou; for a brief space he was captain of the people, but owing either to his own modesty, or to the influence of the more powerful citizens which always prevailed in the industrious city of Messina, that same night by their advice he resigned the government to Baldwin Mussone, a noble returned but a few hours before, with Matthew and Baldwin de Riso, from the court of King Charles. On the following day, the municipal council having been assembled in form, Mussone was hailed Captain by the entire people; and calling on the sacred name of Christ, the Republic was proclaimed under the protection of the Church; and the gonfalon, or great banner of the city, was displayed with the utmost pomp. The judges Raynald de' Limogi and Niccoloso Saporito, the historian Bartholomew of Neocastro, and Peter Ansalone, were elected as counsellors of the new government; and all the public officers, even to the executioners, were likewise elected; as if to show that henceforward the sword of justice was to rule in the place of disorderly violence; but it was yet too soon for so complete a revolution.

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On the 30th of April the galleys were recalled from Palermo, whither messengers of friendship and alliance weredespatched in their stead.

Herbert, feeling himself no longer secure in the castle, had recourse to the old manœuvre of fomenting divisions, but with no better success. He despatched Matthew, a member of the family of Riso, (which, from consciousness of guilt, had allied himself with him,) to endeavour to gain over Baldwin Mussone.<sup>1</sup> Matthew accordingly sought him, and in presence of all the other counsellors admonished him, using the arguments of a crooked policy, to reflect on the great power of the king, and that this insane tumult would

<sup>1</sup> It appears, from all the records of those times, that the Messinese family of Riso was noble and powerful and abounding in men of valour, although they unhappily chose to side with the enemies of their country. But for this crime the house of Riso was severely punished; the greater number of its members perished, and the others were reduced to beg their bread from the hostile stranger. Of the three brothers mentioned by Neocastro, Richard, Matthew, and Baldwin, the two last fell victims to the fury of the people of Messina, in June, 1282; and the first was beheaded on board a galley at the entrance of the Bay of Naples, after the battle of the 5th of June, 1284, in which he had borne arms against his fellow-citizens. James and Parmenio, their nephews, also mentioned by Neocastro, Henry, Niccoloso, another Matthew, Squarcia, Scurione, and Francis, whose names are to be found in numerous diplomas, took refuge in the land of the enemies of Sicily, and received from them subsidies, lucrative appointments, and the promise of fiefs.

deprive Messina of the advantages that would naturally accrue to her from the rebellion of Palermo. What were the Palermitans to him that he should share their madness? in what had Charles injured him or his city? "How is it possible," continued he, "that thou who wast but yesterday loyal to the king, a friend to us, and the companion of our journey, shouldst have secretly nourished such hatred in thy heart? and now, far from restraining the people from rushing to their ruin, shouldst spur them wildly on? For thy own sake, for that of thy country, return to thy senses—it is yet time."<sup>1</sup> But Baldwin, with a clearer comprehension of the honour and interests of the city, which were identical with those of Sicily, answered him indignantly; and neither counsellors nor citizens hesitated for a moment whether to prostitute Messina to the stranger, or bid her share the freedom of the sister cities of the island. Rejecting, therefore, these deceptive arguments, Baldwin, in the presence of Matthew de Riso, solemnly renewed his oath to maintain the liberty of Sicily, or

<sup>1</sup> These, with a few abbreviations, are the identical words of Neocastro.



perish; and exhorted him to join in support of the same sacred cause. In conclusion, he desired him to return to Herbert, and offer him security for his own life and that of his soldiers, if leaving their arms, horses, and accoutrements, they would sail direct for Aigues-Mortes in Provence, binding themselves not to touch anywhere on the Sicilian or other neighbouring coasts. The Viceroy agreed to these terms, and had no sooner traversed half the strait with two vessels than he broke them, and full of hostile designs, landed in Calabria,<sup>1</sup> in order to join Peter of Catanzaro, who, being advised of what was going forward, had embarked before him with his Calabrians, abandoning his horses and baggage to the fury of the people.<sup>2</sup>

Theobald de Messi, castellan of the fortress of Matagrifone, and Micheletto, with those who had taken refuge at Scaletta, subsequently surrendered, with all their followers, on the terms granted to the Viceroy. The former having

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 25, 26. Some historians of succeeding centuries affirm that Herbert was slain at Messina. But the truth of the evidence of Bartholomew de Neocastro is confirmed by several diplomas, which prove that Herbert was alive and in the service of Charles after the revolution of Messina.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 353.

embarked on board a small vessel, set sail several times, and was driven into port by contrary winds or adverse fate; the latter was shut up in the castle and his soldiers in the palace, to protect them from the fury of the multitude. But these precautions availed not to save them. On the 7th of May, the galleys returned from Palermo, bringing captive with them two of those of Amalfi, which had accompanied them in the expedition; and the crew, inflamed either by example, or indignation at the unnatural and useless attempt in which they had been employed against their fellow-countrymen, loudly demanded French blood to slake their thirst for vengeance. The citizens, meanwhile, were no less exasperated by Herbert's breach of faith; so that, as the galley of Natale Pancia entering the port grazed the vessel of Theobald de Messi, the crew, on a signal from the shore, sprang upon her deck, seized and bound the prisoners, and flung them overboard to perish. On beholding this spectacle the former fury blazed up afresh within the city; the mob rushing to the palace, massacred the soldiers taken at Scaletta; the alarm-bells rang; the few partisans of the French concealed them-



selves in terror; the armed and blood-stained people poured in torrents through the streets; even the rulers of the city made no attempt to quell their fury; for Neocastro, who undoubtedly shared in their counsels, writes, that they, on the contrary, advanced the more boldly in the path of revolution when they beheld the multitude so inextricably engaged.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, within the month of April,<sup>2</sup> this memorable revolution, called from the hour of its outbreak the Sicilian Vespers, begun at Palermo with desperate courage, and actively and sagaciously communicated to the entire island, was finally accomplished at Messina. In it fell, says Villani,<sup>3</sup> about four thousand French; but whatever may have been the numbers, for which we have no surer authority, it is certain that the slaughter was vast and deplorable, but necessary at that period; so that it is not without cause, that the people of Sicily proudly retain to this day the recollection of their fierce and ancient valour. Nor is it to be wondered at that the

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 27—30.

<sup>2</sup> Anon. Chron. Sic. p. 147. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Book vii. ch. 61.

contemporary Italian writers speak of it, some, as marvellous and incredible; some, as the result of divine or diabolical agency; since it not only broke the power of Charles, till then regarded as invincible, but even in the first outburst it was in vain that the ruling powers attempted to reduce Palermo with their eleven galleys, or to fortify or keep to their allegiance the other towns nearer to Messina; while there was no fortress, however impregnable, that did not fall into the hands of the liberators; no city or hamlet that did not join their standard. It is indeed recorded by tradition, and henceforward will be proved by a document, that the castle of Sperlinga, commanded by Peter Lamanno, alone in all the island maintained a protracted resistance, owing to the valour of the garrison and the fidelity of its inhabitants; hence the proverb, "What the Sicilians willed, Sperlinga alone refused;"<sup>1</sup> which is still in use amongst the people,

<sup>1</sup> "*Quod Siculis placuit, sola Sperlinga negavit*," I have frequently heard repeated by the lovers of Latin proverbs. The people more briefly and pointedly say only, "*Sperlinga negò*," and this saying appears to me of sufficient value as historical testimony to correct the contemporary historians, who are silent concerning the fate of Sperlinga;—the Sicilians, in order not to perpetuate a painful recollection; the others, from ignorance of

to upbraid those who dissent from a general wish : hence also the opposite fate which befell the garrison and the inhabitants, according to the respective deserts of each, the former being lauded and recompensed by the Angevin government, while the latter have ever since been held in disrepute by the nation for their pertinacity (undeserving of the name of constancy) in a criminal cause. But with the exception of this small number, the unanimity of our forefathers is matter of astonishment, and so much the more so, that both before and after this period they were torn by municipal divisions, which were hushed to silence by the Vespers. Even Messina nobly joined the general movement, although she was at that time the residence of Charles's viceroy and after the Vespers Palermo resumed her ancient influence in the government of the island. But unanimity is facilitated in great masses by similarity of wishes, and by the force of example ; and thus it was that events of a similar character to those of Palermo were every the facts. It is proved by a document that some of Charles's soldiers defended themselves for a long time in the castle of Sperlinga, which would have been scarcely possible without the concurrence of the inhabitants.

where reproduced, and followed by the adoption of the same institutions, of which we will now proceed to speak.

The communal form of government, under the protection of the Church, was adopted, as we have seen, by all the cities and townships,<sup>1</sup> even apparently by those subject to feudal lords, of which the most part had expelled their French feudataries, and all enjoyed municipal privileges, according to the ordinances of the Norman and Suabian governments. Having, therefore, formed themselves into republics, the people elected sometimes one, sometimes several captains, and a varying number of counsellors, who were either men of the people, or nobles of small power and knights, chosen, like any other citizen, on the ground of their personal reputation; or if any were of illustrious birth, the scantiness of their means, as well as their ambition, combined to place them in the ranks of the people.<sup>2</sup> This came to pass in a kingdom subjected for two hundred years to the feudal system, because the foreign barons, newly arrived, and detested on

<sup>1</sup> Anon. Chron. Sic. p. 147. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 4. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 358, 359.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 336.

account of the contributions and personal service, till then unknown in Sicily, were involved in the fall of the monarchy; and the ancient nobles, few in number, and ground down by poverty and proscriptions, were not strong enough to exert any influence. Hence, and owing to the revolutionary impulse having originated with the people, the republican institutions of April, 1282, seem to have been altogether democratic; in fact, the more important deliberations were conducted by the assembled people in the open air.<sup>1</sup> Like the free cities of Italy, those of Sicily remained independent of each other, but admonished by the peril which all perceived to be impending, they united themselves in a league, binding them to mutual defence and support;<sup>2</sup> whether by marches and provinces, or immediately em-

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 27, 37, 41. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 356, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Annali Genovesi, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. vi. p. 576. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 358. Bull of Martin IV. in Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1282, §§ 13—18. D'Esclot, ch. 81, and Saba Malaspina, *loc. cit.*, suppose the other cities to have sworn obedience to the municipality of Palermo. Messina was certainly not amongst them; and all the other authorities, besides many diplomas, point to a confederation, rather than to the supremacy of Palermo, which however it might possibly have possessed *de facto*, and not *de jure*, as being foremost in the revolution, the ancient capital, and the most populous city of Sicily.

bracing the entire island, is not clearly shown by the few diplomas which have been preserved to us, or by the chroniclers, who either were ignorant concerning internal regulations, or passed them over as unimportant. It therefore remains doubtful whether those mentioned by Saba Malaspina were substituted by the decision of the league for the ancient justiciaries, or whether they were elected captains of the people by all the municipalities of one or more provinces. These were Alamanno,<sup>1</sup> Captain of Val di Noto, and afterwards of the entire island; Santoro, of Lentini, in Val Demone, and in the plain of Milazzo; John Foresta, in that of Lentini; Simon of Calatafimi, in the mountains of the Lombards; and others in other towns and districts.<sup>2</sup> Both the individuals and the institutions they represented have sunk into obscurity, because they achieved nothing and lasted but a brief space, Peter of Aragon having appeared upon the

<sup>1</sup> We find many of the name of Lamanno or Alamanno, both on the Sicilian and Angevin side at this period, and it is probable that there might be many families bearing this surname, derived, according to the custom of the time, from the native land of their German forefathers, who might have established themselves in Italy.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 358.

scene at the end of five months, and the faction having prevailed, which suppressing the republic, called him to the throne. Nor does it appear that these, or any other persons, were invested with what we should now call executive power, for we find no traces of their authority, either in our own public documents, or in the fierce invectives of the Court of Rome; but from all the records of the time it is evident that the cities, especially Palermo and Messina which surpassed all the rest in power and influence, acted as corporate political bodies, leagued with the rest and undivided by discord, but independent. Thus we find the Palermitans sending an orator to the Pope, to acquaint him with what had passed, and to implore the protection of the Church;<sup>1</sup> while the Messinese despatched a more welcome messenger to the Emperor Paleologus, one Alafranco Cassano, of Genoa, who, for love of the people of Messina, effected the voyage to Constantinople, in defiance of grave perils.<sup>2</sup> In other matters of government

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 18. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 68. Giachetto Malespini, ch. 210.

<sup>2</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 50.

the municipal magistrates acted as sovereigns ; many of them granted franchises, and the magistrate of Messina restored to the Archbishop the Castle of Calatabiano, and other possessions, which under the rule of Charles the exchequer had pertinaciously refused to give up.

For the rest, it appears certain that the general affairs of the island were conducted by a federal assembly, which, in accordance with ancient custom, was called a Parliament, but was differently constituted from the usual parliaments, as the sovereign was wanting ; and perhaps the barons also, since, at the first commencement of the Republic, the only ties we find are between the several municipalities ; and historians speak only of the assembled syndics of the cities, and of invitations to the several townships to take their places in the commonwealth, being represented in like manner ; using besides other similar expressions which indicate a popular, rather than baronial system of representation ; and as in those days the royal parliaments were convened at the pleasure of the king independently of any fixed time and place, so were these at the need of the



people, in Palermo or Messina.<sup>1</sup> While Charles's forces delayed their coming, the parliaments deliberated to good purpose. They decreed that Messina should be provisioned for two years; that the valiant archers and crossbowmen from the mountains should be called in to strengthen the defensive force of the city; and that ships and men should be sent for the protection of the important cities of Catania, Agosta, and Syracuse on the east coast; and Milazzo, Patti, and Cefalù on the west. These preparations originated in the immutable determination never again to tolerate the French yoke, in which all concurred, although differing as to the means to be employed; for some desired to unite themselves more closely with the Church, and consolidate republican institutions; others, to offer the throne to some foreign prince upon equitable conditions.<sup>2</sup> But these matters were debated without blood-

<sup>1</sup> The parliaments held at Messina have been quoted above, and another will be recorded in the following chapters. That in which the preparations for defence were determined upon was held at Messina, as may be conjectured from a passage of Saba Malaspina, to be quoted presently, and from another in the lost poetical history of Bartholomew de Neocastro, mentioned by Zurita in his *Annals of Aragon*, book iv. ch. 18.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* pp. 359, 360.

shed, and even without acrimony ; and hence it is beautiful to contemplate this Sicilian brotherhood awaking to new life, and, without jealousy or internal dissensions, eagerly co-operating in the common defence, uniting itself closely in counsel, assembling its forces, and calmly considering the means of establishing a stable form of government. In the hope that the present order of things would prove durable, it was resolved to adopt the date of this memorable revolution as a new era, so that we find several diplomas thus headed—"In the first year of the dominion of the Holy Church of Rome, and of the happy Republic."<sup>1</sup>

Several chronicles, as already mentioned in the preceding chapter, give the glory of this noble achievement to Procida and to the conspiracy, and their example has been followed by the generality of the world, so that in these days we find the subject placed in no other light,

<sup>1</sup> Diploma of the 15th August, 1282, produced by Gallo in his *Annals of Messina*, vol. ii. p. 131. Perhaps in the public Acts they might use the date of the first year of the Republic, in accordance with the custom of the Court of Rome, and of all other principalities at that time, when it was usual to name the indiction (a term of fifteen years), and the year of the reign of the prince, and sometimes even of the feudatary, rather than the date of the year according to the common era.

whether in histories, tragedies, romances, or essays. I too shared in this belief, until research into the histories of the times convinced me of my error. Of the first authors of this version very few are contemporaneous; the others wrote, some a longer, some a shorter period after the events, and all are rendered obnoxious to suspicion by partisanship and by manifest error in some of their facts. But those amongst the contemporary historians, whose evidence carries with it the greatest weight, whether Italians or foreigners some of whom are remarkable for candour, more especially Saba Malaspina, who was a zealous Guelf, secretary of Pope Martin, and better informed than any one on the subject of the affairs of Sicily, make mention, at the utmost, of some vague designs of Peter, but do not say a word of conspiracy with the Sicilians, much less of any meeting of the conspirators at Palermo; and relate how the insults of the French on that day, and still more the "abuse of power, which always afflicts a subject people, moved Palermo;" such are the words of the most sublime genius of Italy,<sup>1</sup> a contemporary.

<sup>1</sup> Dante, Paradiso, ch. 8.

of strict veracity, and exceeding all beside in penetration.

Neither the excommunications and censures of the Popes, nor the subsequent diplomatic acts, contain any accusation of a conspiracy giving birth to the Vespers, but they blame Peter for having accepted the crown at the hands of the rebels, and for having encouraged them by his envoys after the revolution. The evidence afforded by the necessary causes of other undoubted facts confirms the authority of history; Peter had not quitted Spain, nor were his preparations completed at the first outbreak of the revolution, in which no writer makes mention of Procida; none of the greater feudataries took the lead in the tumult, or in the governments to which it gave rise; the Republic, and not the accession of Peter, was proclaimed, and lasted for five months; the humours of the time were purely democratic; three months later, Peter sailed, not to Sicily, but to Africa; then, when the peril became imminent, the Barons, having seized the reins of power, at length called him to the throne.

From these and all other particulars, it is

evident that the revolution of the Vespers was an unpremeditated movement of a popular nature, a solitary instance in the monarchies of the middle ages. Otherwise, barons who conspire with a king and proclaim a Republic; conspirators who, uncompelled by danger, give the signal of action before their forces are in readiness; a party triumphing, and then abandoning the state to men of an inferior grade; would be inexplicable anomalies, contrary to human nature, and never before witnessed. The various statements of historians, and the diplomatic records, will be found in the Appendix. What is to be gathered from them, in my opinion, is this:—that Peter aspired to the throne of Sicily, and intrigued to obtain it; that the Barons, who were in his interest, may possibly have urged on the people, but did not as yet consider themselves strong enough to act, and, hesitating and maturing, would perhaps never have effected what was accomplished without reflection by the multitude. The people were unconsciously moved by the antagonism of race, but they were fully sensible of their wrongs, and that for these there was but one remedy. The exac-

tions for the Greek campaign, the outrages of the week before Easter in Palermo, and the intolerable insult of Drouet, made the cup overflow. Amongst the masses of the people was found one mind,—far-seeing or thoughtless, we know not which—one resolute arm, which gave the signal. The people of Palermo, quick in thought and deed, hesitated not an instant to follow the example, every heart being animated by the same wish, which might bear a semblance of conspiracy to a person of slender penetration, who should fail to reflect that, when once the public mind is predisposed, any fortuitous accident may suffice to kindle a blaze so general as neither art nor intrigue could produce. Those who made themselves leaders of the people then assumed the power of the state ; they gave it a communal form, in accordance with their own humours, and retained it through the credit of success, until the influence of the Barons slowly unfolded itself, and the peril became more imminent. Then the monarchy was restored ; then Peter was called to the throne ; then, and not till then, if conspiracy there existed, were its effects felt. Afterwards the world began to seek a marvellous cause



for this marvellous event; the Vespers and the coming of Peter were woven and confounded together; after the lapse of years some anterior practices came to light, and were perhaps boastfully exaggerated; and in the kingdom of Naples, in Guelfic Italy, and more especially in France, the report of the conspiracy was studiously propagated, because it appeared to throw blame on the Sicilians, and diminish that which attached to the Angevin government. Thus, the facts gradually becoming more and more distorted, the conspiracy of Procida with the three potentates grew into the marvellous fable of the slaughter of all the French in Sicily in one day and even in one hour, and of an entire nation secretly conspiring for many years; things not merely untrue, but impossible. Ignorance, the difficulty of communication, the scantiness of chronicles, and the natural inclination of men to the marvellous rather than the true, tended to diffuse the error, as frequently occurs in our own times notwithstanding the great difference of our material condition. Successive historians copied each other; several recorded both statements (that of the conspiracy, and that of the spontaneous outbreak),

without giving any opinion of their own upon the question. Passing over the rest, I will merely mention that Gibbon doubted solely because he was deceived by an anachronism; and Voltaire derided the idea of conspiracy. It is therefore no presumption on my part if, supported by such reasons and such authority, I maintain the opinion I have advanced.<sup>1</sup>


<sup>1</sup> See the Appendix.



## CHAPTER VII.

GRIEF AND RAGE OF CHARLES ON THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF THE REVOLUTION—HE COMMANDS THAT THE FORCES ASSEMBLED FOR THE GRECIAN WAR SHOULD PASS OVER INTO SICILY.—BULL OF THE POPE AGAINST THE REBELS—THEIR ANSWER.—MISSION OF CARDINAL GHERARDO, OF PARMA.—PREPARATIONS OF CHARLES, AND OF THE MESSINESE.—DEFEAT OF THE SICILIANS AT MILAZZO.—DISEMBARKATION OF KING CHARLES.—COMMENCEMENT OF THE SIEGE.—PRACTICES OF THE CARDINAL IN MESSINA.—MINOR ASSAULTS.—GENERAL ATTACK UPON THE CITY—REPULSE OF THE FRENCH.—ATTEMPT TO SHAKE THE FAITH OF ALAIMO, CAPTAIN OF THE PEOPLE OF MESSINA.—APRIL—SEPTEMBER, 1282.

It was at the Papal Court, and from the Archbishop of Morreale, that Charles received intelligence of the Sicilian massacre. The tidings struck him with a presentiment of impending ruin, and awoke in his proud spirit a sort of desperate resignation even before rousing it to anger, so that he humbly turned to Heaven for help, and was heard to pray, "Oh Lord God, since it is thy



pleasure to send adverse fortune upon me, may it please thee that I should fall by slow degrees.”<sup>1</sup> He hastened breathlessly to Naples, where being apprised of the progress of the rebellion, he gave way to uncontrolled fury, to the utter disregard of his regal dignity. He paced his apartments with rapid strides, as if beside himself, in silence and with savage looks, gnawing a stick with his teeth like an angry dog ; till at length he began to vent his rage in words : he would go to Sicily ; every moment of delay seemed to him a century : he would go to demolish the cities, to burn up the provinces, to extirpate by fearful tortures all that rebellious race : he would leave Sicily a naked and uninhabited rock, as an example of regal justice, and a terror to remote ages. The Sicilians who were in Naples on account of commercial transactions, and who could be no sharers in the guilt of their countrymen, were compelled to seek safety in flight or concealment. Meanwhile Charles busied himself in assembling the soldiers enrolled for the Grecian expedition, in reviewing,

<sup>1</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 61, 62. These are the words which he puts into Charles's mouth. Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida, *loc. cit.* p. 265. Giach. Malespini, ch. 210.

exhorting, and completing his preparations; and waited impatiently for further tidings, which all were of sinister import, till at last came those of the revolution of Messina, which roused him to fresh paroxysms of rage,<sup>1</sup> but secretly chilled his heart with fear. He immediately despatched to the King of France a letter, dictated doubtless by himself, which ill concealed the grief and depression of his spirit: it stated that Sicily had revolted, that great evils would ensue if he did not hasten to remedy them with a powerful army; and he requested that the King of France would be pleased to send him instantly five hundred men-at-arms, with the Count of Artois, or some other valiant captain, himself defraying the expenses, for which he should be indemnified without loss of time.<sup>2</sup>

While in this sudden reverse of fortune he implored the assistance of forces from his mother-country, the Court of Rome aided him with counsels and possibly with money, with prayers, and with unmeasured maledictions upon the

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 31. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 5.

<sup>2</sup> The revolution of Messina took place on the 28th of April, and on the 9th of May Charles wrote this letter to Philip the Bold.

rebels.<sup>1</sup> On Ascension-day Martin IV. issued a proclamation from Orvieto to the whole of Christendom, commanding that none should presume to favour this revolution; declaring that the disobedient, if bishops or prelates, should be deposed, and if princes or barons, despoiled of their fiefs and their vassals absolved from their allegiance; pronouncing all federal treaties entered into by the Sicilian cities to be null and void; sternly admonishing the Palermitans and other leaders of the movement, to submit themselves to Charles, and threatening all who should harden themselves in their guilt with countless penalties in their goods, their persons, and their souls.<sup>2</sup>

The answer he received was firm, but couched in reverent terms, so that Martin, having heard the Sicilian orators, said that they treated him as the rabble treated Christ, when they "hailed him King of the Jews, and smote him with their hands;"<sup>3</sup> and such was undoubtedly the spirit, if not of the first embassy to the Court of Rome,

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 361. Gio. Villani, *Giacchetto Malaspini*, and *Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida*, passages quoted above.

<sup>2</sup> Bull in Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1282, §§ 13—18.

<sup>3</sup> Gio. Villani, *book vii. ch. 63.*

at any rate of the remonstrance after its admonition, or after the first excommunication, which addresses itself to the Conscript Fathers, (so it terms the cardinals,) sharers in the unlimited power of the Pope, who sit in the Sacred College to hold the scales of justice, and to advise together for the public benefit unbiassed by any considerations of private interest; and which complains in a style frequently verbose, sometimes confused, and still oftener brilliant and poetical, that the Court of Rome should favour the iniquitous rule of Charles of Anjou, who came from the distant regions of the west to the shores of Sicily, and should command the Sicilians to return to the yoke of Egyptian bondage which they had shaken off by divine inspiration and assistance,—a barbarous yoke, which the Pope did not know, and which he sought to replace upon the necks already swelled and bleeding from long years of endurance. With the same intemperate rhetoric it proceeds to compare the French and Latin nations, exaggerating abuse of the one, and praise of the other. “Should *they*,” it exclaims, “should *they* rule over us! should *they* administer justice! Who would endure their hands ever ready for

blood and injury, their dark countenances, their threatening aspect, their arrogant words, their very breath? Oh Death! hope of the wretched, rest even of the happy, our souls, impatient to be removed hence, either to heaven or to hell, longed for thee, so long as our condemned bodies were powerless to serve our country! Conscript Fathers, this is not rebellion which you behold; this is not an ungrateful flight from the bosom of a mother; but legitimate resistance in accordance with canon and civil law, chaste love, zeal for modesty, the sacred defence of liberty. We stir up the vortex of our griefs, and draw forth on the shore the weed festering in the depths of the sea. Behold women forced before the eyes of their husbands, maidens dishonoured, injuries accumulated until it seems as if there were no room for more; behold stripes on the back, hands raised to strike the face which bears the likeness of the Creator, homicides, imprisonments, rapine, contumely; occupation of the property of the Church, the dominion of brute force, the sovereign made sole arbitrator of marriages,—evils of which the Court of Rome neither is, nor can be ignorant, which are known to the most distant

nations. Conscript Fathers, there is a fury excited by extreme misery, there is a force of necessity, a reaction of human liberty,—and then no excess of cruelty is so inhuman that it may not be beneficial as a warning to restrain the wicked. The bodies of women were ripped up; infants were slain before their birth; history will relate it to the most remote ages; and thus let vice perish ere it sees the light! thus with the brood of the serpent be its venom destroyed!” There is a sort of sublimity in the fierce desperation of these impious words. “And now,” continues the unknown author, leaving the cardinals, and attacking the Pope, “now I turn to you, and upon you shall the cup be poured out. Wars rage around; enemies threaten, nations tremble torn by intestine and foreign wars; and these, Father, are the fruit of your works!” Here he touches on the connivance at the insurrection of Viterbo, and all the misdeeds of King Charles in Rome; and brings not a few accusations against Martin, reminding him that in devoting himself to the interests of a party, he lessened the authority of the Court of Rome; that crimes, permitted because they are advantageous, lead to crimes which are injurious;

that he did wrong to promote his partisans, and neglect the other affairs of the Church; and that disturbances devour their authors; adding, "The axe is raised, the signal is given to strike; seek then to grasp it yourself before it severs the tree from the root." With these words, and many more, he exhorts Pope Martin to change his course, if he regards his salvation. From the ideas, the style, and the excess of passion to which he gives way, the author would seem to be an ecclesiastic, a man of some education, and a daring patriot. No one can either assert or deny, that this remonstrance was sent to the Court of Rome when the way of pardon was known to be closed, and that nothing remained but to protest firmly. But if the rulers of Sicily did not write in these identical words, they assuredly wrote in the same sense; and at any rate the document which has been preserved to us is unquestionably both of the country and of the period; it bears the burning impress of the revolution, a fire which once extinguished, it was impossible to feign.<sup>1</sup>

The Court of Rome perceiving that the Sicilians were not to be moved from their purpose, turned

<sup>1</sup> Document II. at the end of the work.



to other counsels. It deputed Cardinal Gherardo of Parma as Pontifical Legate invested with extraordinary powers in the kingdom of Sicily.<sup>1</sup> The bull runs thus: "Moved by our extreme love for Sicily, and deeply grieved at the offences with which she is troubled by the enemy of mankind, we send thee forth, brother, as an angel of peace; do thou root up and destroy, scatter and dissipate, build and plant; make use of all our authority for the glory of God and the reformation of the kingdom."<sup>2</sup> The penetration of the Papal counsels is also manifested by a statute promulgated at that time by Charles, in which attributing all the misgovernment to the inferior officers, he moderated the most oppressive exactions of the exchequer, of the magistrates, and of their subordinates; and even the harshness of some of the laws, the encroachments of the feudataries in municipal affairs, and the violence exercised by them in the surrounding districts.<sup>3</sup> These were flatteries to appease the Sicilians,

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 361. Villani, Giacchetto Malespini, and the Chronicle of the Conspiracy, in the passages quoted.

<sup>2</sup> Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1282, § 20. The bull is dated from Orvieto, the 4th of June, 1282.

<sup>3</sup> Capitoli del Regno di Napoli, 10th June, 1282, p. 26, etc.

blandishments addressed to the people of Apulia and Calabria, in order that, being oppressed by the same rule, they might not rise in imitation of the example of their neighbours, but satisfied and grateful, might afford assistance to the king. In assembling the feudal militia of those provinces, he had in fact great difficulties to overcome by his power and resolution.<sup>1</sup> He added to them a thousand Saracens from Lucera, with horsemen and footmen from Florence and other Guelf and Lombard cities; the French, whether vassals or mercenaries, were the sinews of the force; Genoa and Pisa furnished galleys; all those of the kingdom were assembled; and the king sent for twenty-four additional ones from Provence, as the most part of those prepared for the Grecian expedition were shut up in the port of Messina. Besides these there were collected as many transports and minor vessels as were required for the passage of the troops. Charles commanded that all his forces should proceed to La Catona, a little town of Calabria, situated on the straits opposite to Messina, which he desired first to assault; and he sent forward forty galleys, abundance of grain

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 367.

and other provisions, and everything which could be required for the supply of the army. There he afterwards reviewed fifteen thousand horse and sixty thousand foot, ready to serve the designs of his vengeance, together with a hundred and fifty or two hundred vessels of war and transport;<sup>1</sup> an enormous force, but which does not appear exaggerated when we reflect, that Charles was already prepared for a great enterprise in which he was assisted by the half of Italy, by France, and by the Court of Rome; and that before the struggles between the power of the sovereign and of the barons, and the consequent use of standing armies, forces almost as numerous as those of the present day could be assembled, with only a summons to the barons and knights, and a comparatively small sum, for the scanty pay of the foot soldiers. A cardinal armed with censures and with full powers; a king inured to war

<sup>1</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 64, 65. Paolino di Pietro, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. xxvi. p. 38. Anon. Chron. Sic. ch. 39. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 367, 368, 381. Geste de' Conti di Barcellona, ch. 28, *loc. cit.* Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 5. Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida, *loc. cit.* p. 270. Montaner, ch. 43. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 32. D'Esclot, ch. 82. Annals of Genoa, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. vi. p. 576. These, however, give very different statements of the numbers of the vessels and forces.

and accustomed to victory; an immense army eager for vengeance, and thirsting for prey; the impetuosity of France; the cunning of Rome; the fury of an offended tyrant, and all the arts of war and of policy, thus grouped themselves menacingly on the extreme point of Italy, for the conquest of the rebel island.

Messina, the brilliant and majestic queen of the straits, is seated between two seas, facing the east; for on the left the promontory of Peloro advances into the Mediterranean; while on the right the cape of San Ranieri stretches out so boldly into the Ionian sea, curving in the shape of a scythe over against the bend of the shore, as to form a vast and deep harbour, sheltered from every blast. The hills slope down into the sea, so that a considerable part of the city is built upon the acclivity, from whence the bay, the strait, and the opposite coast of Calabria form a magnificent panorama. The plain unfolds itself a little towards the north, and gains a greater expanse towards the east, where it is adorned with villas and vineyards; the hills are covered with wood, and were still more so in those days than in ours. Otherwise, neither the aspect of the country nor

the site of the city have undergone any change, though it has experienced more than one catastrophe; and after the earthquake of 1783, which nearly destroyed it, its walls were rebuilt from their foundations.

Every heart and every arm in this noble city now nerved itself for the defence. The greatest anxiety was displayed to strengthen the port, an attack by land forces not being expected so soon. The country was levelled towards the north, the vines uprooted, the scattered dwellings destroyed, and the wood-work of the latter employed for the repairs of the walls, or for the construction of engines of war; works which, however, could not be so effectually completed, as not to require further labour bestowed upon them in the hour of greatest need. Strong iron chains fastened to floating beams were thrown across the mouth of the harbour, to close it against hostile vessels. The headland of San Ranieri was defended by a chosen corps of young men, under the command of Nicholas Bivacqua and James de Brugnali, posted in the Church of the Saviour situated on its extreme point where now stands a fortress of the same name. The war commenced with a

favourable omen for Sicily, when on the second of June, seeing forty hostile galleys set sail from La Catona, the Messinese sent forth thirty to the encounter; the enemy, taken by surprise, hastily took refuge at Scylla, and the crews leapt ashore, while the horses of Herbert of Orleans, and of the Count of Catanzaro, drew themselves up in array to afford them protection; but it was the adverse wind which sprung up, and not the display of hostile force, which restrained the Sicilians, eager to rush in to the attack, and to burn the vessels.<sup>1</sup>

At that period the courage of a Sicilian friar excited the admiration even of his enemies. King Charles, on the 10th of June, arrived at La Catona with a squadron of troops; the newly-equipped galleys were daily coming in from Brindisi; and amid the display thus made by the enemy, the Messinese longed to obtain exact information of his numbers and designs. On the entreaty of the municipal council, Bartholomew da Piazza, of the Minorite Friars, a man of letters, of high moral character and distinguished name, undertook to reconnoitre them; not as a base spy,

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 31.

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but as a citizen, who, at his country's need, dares to confront the block as a soldier confronts the sword. The friar proceeded to Calabria, neither fearfully nor secretly; and being brought before Charles, the latter asked him roughly, "Wherefore dost thou come hither from my traitorous subjects?" "I am no traitor," firmly replied the friar; "nor do I come from a city of traitors; but moved by religion and conscience, I come hither to admonish the Minorite Friars, not to countenance this thy most unjust warfare. Providence committed an innocent people to thy care, and thou hast suffered it to be devoured by wolves and dogs. Thou didst harden thy heart against tears and lamentations; we therefore turned ourselves to Heaven, and Heaven heard us and taught us to vindicate our sacred rights. But dost thou hope, the victory obtained, to accuse us of felony? Know, oh king! that all these forces are assembled in vain against the Messinese; for they have walls and towers, and strong hearts fired by the divine beams of liberty; and raised above the weakness of human nature, they await thee prepared to die. Think thou on Pharaoh!" Whether from the fear of Heaven, or a desire to

conciliate the Messinese, the king abstained from doing any injury to the monk. He vented his wrath by giving orders for a first attack: and Bartholomew returning to his fellow-citizens, reported to them the strength of the host, and the dark designs of Charles.<sup>1</sup>

It was against Milazzo that the assault was directed, because it was from thence that Messina obtained the provisions with which the parliament had decreed that the city should be provided; a decree which, between poverty and universal mistrust, had been but imperfectly executed. The Counts of Brienne and Catanzaro, Herbert of Orleans, and Bertram d'Accursio, leaders of this attack, were charged to burn the crops, sack the country, carry off the herds for the use of the army, and then occupy Milazzo. On the 12th of June they set sail from La Catona, with five hundred horse and a thousand foot, on board of sixty vessels. The captain of the city would not risk his small fleet against so considerable a force and the hundred other vessels which were seen ranged along the coast, but preferred confronting them on shore. He therefore hastily equipped

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 32, 34.



five hundred horse and considerable squadrons of foot, with which, while the French fleet rounded the Cape, he traversed the hills of the *Peloriade*, and, advancing along the northern shore, led his men to Milazzo, just as the enemy was making sail towards it. Thus the Sicilians advanced to a considerable distance from Messina, and, unused to marching in order, overcome by heat, fatigue, and the weight of their arms, they dispersed, some to seek for water or for shade, some to call the peasantry to arms; when near to the cane plantations of San Gregorio, at the fountain of Aleta, the enemy seeing them engaged amongst the rocks in such disorder, suddenly landed. Baldwin wished to halt, collect his scattered forces, and send to the city for reinforcements; but Henry of Amelina having opposed him, on account of a private grudge, all resolved on adopting the course which appeared the most honourable. Undaunted, indeed, but weary and scattered, they surrounded the enemy, who, fresh and well-disciplined, overthrew them in the first encounter. Henry of Amelina himself, Anfuso de Camulio, Bertoldo Alamanno, and Peter Cafici, knights; Bartholomew Mussone, Martin of Benincasa,

Abraham of Ambrosio, Nicholas Rosso, and about a thousand others, of less distinction, were slain in the *mêlée* and in the flight. Many prisoners were also taken; amongst whom history records the names of Robert of Mileto, a knight, who died a prisoner of the French, and Henry Rosso, a merchant, who, after the conclusion of the siege, ransomed himself for a thousand ounces of gold.<sup>1</sup>

When the defeat was known in the city, the people, exasperated by grief and further incited by Baldwin Mussone, the inexpert captain, who complained of treachery in order to exculpate himself, rose tumultuously in search of the traitors, and called forth the partisans of the French, the detested De Risos, to death. Matthew and Baldwin, dragged from the castle of Matarifone, where they had at first been shut up, were torn to pieces; James was beheaded by the hand of the executioner. Their corpses were dragged through the city, and flung aside unburied, with such extreme fury that their friends

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 33, 35, 36. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 5. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 66. They however differ as to the numbers engaged.

dared not even weep for them, and their relations hardly escaped sharing their doom. Meanwhile, the mob, having already forgotten the ill-fated struggle, as if these deaths had been so many triumphs, joyfully paraded the walls of the city, or gave themselves up to noisy rejoicings in the streets. But within a short space, the people, persuaded probably by the more prudent among them, with one voice deposed Mussone from his office of Captain of the People, and raised in his stead, by general acclamation, Alaimo of Lentini, a hale and valiant old man, noble of blood and of fame, and of great experience in war. This measure was of signal benefit, not only to Messina, but to the entire island.

No sooner had Alaimo assumed the command, than with great military skill he proceeded to set the defences of the city in order, to repair and provide, minutely to inspect everything, and unceasingly to instruct the people in the use of arms.<sup>1</sup> Catania, and all the municipalities of the vast tract of country between Tusa and Agosta,

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 36, 37. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 5.

also hailed him their Captain of the People; whether before or after Messina is not known.<sup>1</sup>

Another month passed away in preparations on either side; and at length, on the 25th of July,<sup>2</sup> the king put all his forces in motion. He caused the baggage, provisions, horses, and after them the troops, to be embarked; last of all he himself mounted the deck of a galley proudly decorated with purple, seeming as though it held the fate of the world in its grasp. But with all this parade, avoiding the formidable port of Messina, he put to shore four miles to the south at the abbey of Santa Maria Roccamadore; again hoping to entice the citizens forth to give battle far from the town. But Alaimo curbed the ill-timed ardour which Charles's movements failed not to

<sup>1</sup> A diploma dated August 1274, in the Royal Archives of Naples, shows this nobleman to have held in 1274 the office of Justiciary in Principato and in the province of Benevento. In another diploma, dated 29th Oct. 1279, we read on the margin, "Alaymo de Lentini et sociis secretis Sicilie," which confirms the fact that Alaimo was noble, employed in the highest offices of the state, and rich enough to farm that of the "Segrezia."\*

<sup>2</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 38.

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\* The "Segrezia" was the office of the census, and had the right of levying the royal imposts.—*Translator*.

#### SICILIAN VESPERS.

excite. Disappointed in his expectation, the king pitched his tents, and, according to Neocastro, caused the monks of the abbey to be put to death. But this I do not believe, as it is not mentioned by the other historians, nor is it in accordance with the counsels of the king, who commenced by feigning clemency. He indeed suffered his seamen and soldiers to sack the country, hoping that the Messinese, in order to save their property, would seek to come to terms ; but the effect produced was directly contrary. As from Roccamadore to the torrent of Cammari they saw the smiling garden disappear, the trees felled, the vines trampled down, the cottages, farms, and wine-presses sacked ; the houses dismantled, and everything destroyed that could not be carried away,—and as the next day, the army having changed its quarters, the devastation approached still nearer, the Messinese, regardless of everything but their honour and their liberty, sought only the more eagerly to provoke and defy the Angevin monarch. They set fire to seventy of the galleys that had been equipped for the Grecian expedition, and manufactured arms from the iron-work found in their ashes. They took

some other vessels to pieces, and employed the materials in the repair of walls and palisades, and being unable to fortify the suburb of Santa Croce, situated to the south of the town, where now stands that of Zaera, they abandoned it. Charles occupied it on the third day, pitching his camp in that quarter, and so close to the city as to be only separated from it by the little torrent of Porta de' Legni. He himself took up his abode in the monastery of the Preaching Friars, situated upon the hill which has since obtained the name of the King's Vineyard, and caused a small tower of wood to be raised upon the roof, that he might have a view of the interior of the city, and even be able to injure it with his engines. But this the Messinese no sooner perceived, than turning their catapults in that direction, they destroyed the tower with showers of stones.<sup>1</sup> Such was their first greeting to their former sovereign.

The captains, assembled in council, now debated whether the city were to be at once impetuously assaulted before it became inured to the perils of war, or to be regularly besieged, until it

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 38. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 5, 7. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 368, 369. D'Esclot, ch. 82.



should be reduced to surrender by hunger and discouragement. The more fiery declared the honour of so great an army to be at stake in the conflict with a plebeian multitude ensconced behind palisades and heaps of rubbish, rather than walls. It was energy which triumphed in war, and why should just vengeance be delayed? The others, on the contrary, represented the success of an attack by force of arms as doubtful, and argued that if taken by assault the town would be put to the sack by the ruffians of the camp, with little benefit to the monarch; whereas through fear or weariness, it might undoubtedly be gained without bloodshed. Charles, contrary to his own fierce nature, adopted the latter course, being persuaded to it by his avarice and by the hope that the Messinese would always suffer themselves to be cajoled by fair words.<sup>1</sup>

He therefore abstained from attacking the outposts, which offered the greatest advantages, and on the 6th of August commanded a vigorous assault upon the monastery of the

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 6. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 369, 370. Giachetto Malespini, ch. 211. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 68. Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida, *loc. cit.* p. 268. Ptolemy of Lucca, Hist. Eccl. book xxiv. ch. 6. Muratori, R. I. S. vol. xi.

Saviour, which, commanding the mouth of the port, might be considered the key of the city. It was defended by a hundred Messinese, who, neither terrified by the numbers of the assailants, nor by the shock of the first onslaught, fought so bravely from the walls and roofs that they drove them back, enabling Alaimo to come to their assistance with fresh combatants from the city, when the battle was renewed more fiercely than ever, until at length the French withdrew with shame and loss.

This first victory served greatly to raise the courage of the citizens, and on the 8th of August a more important conflict ended with a similar result on the Monte della Capperina, which, commanding the city from the south-east, had been fortified by Alaimo with ditches and palisades, and committed to a sufficient guard of archers; but a heavy shower of hail and rain coming on, these raw recruits abandoned their post, on perceiving which, the French and the Florentines, seizing the moment, ascended rapidly through the olive grounds, and were just gaining the height, when Alaimo, apprised of the event, and aware that in another moment Messina would be lost,



rushed precipitately to the rescue, followed by the people. He encountered the assailants, regained the redoubt, and, night having already closed in, he repaired the defences by torchlight in the face of the enemy, weakened and discouraged by the great slaughter.

This was the night of the capitol to Messina. The duty had been so apportioned in the city that the men, enrolled by troops, took it in turn to watch day and night as sentinels and videttes, and that the women patrolled the city. The French attempting another assault upon the Capperina in the night, and having quietly surmounted the defences, fell in with one of these female guards. Dina and Chiarenza, two obscure women, whose names the injustice of history has barely handed down to us, saved their country. Dina was the first to call the citizens to arms, flinging down at the same time a huge mass from the height, which felled several hostile soldiers to the earth, while her companion rung an alarm; so that the report soon spread through the city that the enemy was at the Capperina; the people knew no more, and in the darkness and confusion did not consider the extent of the danger, but

hastened to confront it. With their gallant Alaimo, they sprung upon the astonished and disappointed foe, and not only drove them back, but, rushing forth from the redoubt, the Messinese burghers on foot chased those veteran troops, supported by cavalry, even to the foot of Charles's tents.<sup>1</sup>

The unlooked-for result of these encounters was regarded as miraculous, both by the enemy and by the Sicilians, and this belief was strengthened by supernatural events and by natural causes. The soldiers of the enemy approaching the walls to parley, related to the Sicilians that a woman in white raiment was seen to hover over the walls, extending, to shield herself, a delicate veil which repelled every blow; that the courage of the assailants fell before her divine semblance, and chilled with horror they betook themselves to flight, being moreover transfixed by arrows sent by an invisible foe; and that, besides all this, the camp was troubled with a deadly epidemic. Even the Saracens of Lucera swore, by the God

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 39. Both here and elsewhere I have occasionally reproduced the original words of the contemporary historian, where they have appeared to me most powerful or animated. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 68.

whom all mankind adore, to the truth of these statements; inquired on one occasion who the divine personage might be, and would have said more, but that a sudden alarm caused them to make a precipitate retreat. Thus faith in the supernatural aid of the Virgin Mother, through which they believed themselves invincible, struck deep root in the hearts of the Messinese, spurring them on to acts of the greatest heroism; and when the siege was at an end they raised a temple, bearing the joyful name of victory, to their heavenly protectress. The tradition was handed down from generation to generation, and registered in the annals of credulous history.<sup>1</sup>

We turn now to the miracles wrought by human valour; fortifications finished amidst the storming of the siege; a nation of soldiers created; neither age nor sex shrinking from the toils of war; no undertaking appearing hard; watchings, privations, poverty, endured without a murmur; the fear of death forgotten; more than all, envy and discord silenced; a whole multitude animated by one single thought, that of saving Messina. In a

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 40. Rocco Pirri, *Sicilia Sacra*, vol. i. p. 407.

few days the wall rose high and steep where it had been before accessible to ladders ; where it appeared weak it was strengthened, and where walls could not be raised their place was supplied by palisades and ramparts of casks and fascines. At a due distance from the exterior curtain was raised a counterscarp, foundations were excavated, ramparts formed, beams laid in order, and during all this time every individual in the city aided in the fight, their zeal overcoming bodily infirmity, the force of habit, and the pride of caste. Nobles, jurists, merchants, artizans, the lowest rabble, priests, friars, old men and children, all aided in the work according to their powers ; eager and anxious, says Saba Malaspina, as a swarm of bees labouring at their honeycomb. Women delicately brought up, of all ages and all degrees of strength, were seen, emulous of each other, tottering under the weight of stones and mortar, which through showers of missiles they carried to the workmen, or going the rounds of the walls distributing bread and *polenta*,<sup>1</sup> supplying water, pouring out wine, and above all encouraging the defenders with noble words : “ Courage,

<sup>1</sup> A sort of pudding, made of the flour of Indian corn.—*Trans.*

citizens! In the name of the Blessed Virgin, hold out against all fatigue. May God preserve you to your country! He beholds your work, and he will defend Messina." Meanwhile the other Sicilians, eluding the vigilance of the besieging force, came to the assistance of the city, with men, arms, and provisions, which they supplied to them through the passes of the hills. The energy of the Messinese increased with the danger, and in proportion as they became more inured to it. It held out during the whole length of the siege and every day rendered the defence more effectual.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 7. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 372. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 68; Giachetto Malespini, ch. 211; both of whom give the commencement of the following song:—

"Deh com' egli è gran pietate  
Delle Donne di Messina,  
Veggendole scapigliate  
Portando pietre e calcina,  
Iddio gli dea briga e travaglia  
A chi Messina vuol guastare," &c.

Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 42, in relating an attack upon the city, mentions the same particulars.

The assistance received from the other cities is confirmed by a diploma of the 15th August, 1282, in Gallo, *Annals of Messina*, vol. ii. p. 131, in which freedom of customs dues and other privileges, are granted to the citizens of Syracuse, in the province of Messina, because they had sent a sufficient force of horse and foot, during the present siege, "dell' ingente esercito" of King Charles, and because they had kept faith with Messina.

Such being the perseverance of the citizens, and Charles adhering firmly to his design of reducing them without a battle, conferences were opened through the means of Cardinal Gherardo. Historians are not agreed as to whether he or the Messinese made the first advances; but he undoubtedly entered upon them charged with messages of clemency from the Pope and the King. He was not, however, a man suited to conduct such an affair with duplicity. In consequence of the form of government which had been adopted, the citizens received him with regal honours as Legate of the Pope; so that he was conducted to the cathedral amid the applause of the people, the keys of the city were presented to him, and he received from Alaimo the baton of command. He was entreated to assume the government in the name of the Holy Roman Church; and to give a ruler to the city to whom they would pay the tribute due to the sovereign; but they insisted on the departure of the French, and exhorted him in God's name to drive them from the territory of the Church. To this Gherardo replied, according to his instructions, that their sins were grievous, but that the Church



admonished them with the affection of a mother ; that it was committed to him to reconcile Messina with her king, and that he would gladly do so ; but that they must not speak of conditions, which could have no existence between a sovereign and his subjects. He counselled them to hope in the magnanimity and clemency of Charles, who would be willing to pardon the city and reserve his chastisements only for those guilty of murder ; it would be vain for them to attempt to treat on other terms ; they would do well to submit, and would have cause to be satisfied with the result. "Messina," added he in conclusion, "has given herself up to the protection of the Church in whose name I resign her to King Charles." "To Charles, never !" interrupted Alaimo in a voice of thunder, snatching the baton of command from the hand of the Cardinal ; "no, Father, these are idle dreams ; so long as we have blood and weapons left, we will never again submit to the French." Words to the same effect burst in various tones from the lips of the multitude, and vain were the arguments of Gherardo, vain the replies of the people ; for which cause the public negotiations were broken off, and thirty of the most noted amongst

the citizens were deputed to seek in a more tranquil conference some possible means of coming to terms.

The conditions they proposed were disadvantageous to the king, perilous to Messina, and still more so to the rest of Sicily; they demanded that Charles should grant a free pardon to the city; that he should be content with the revenues derived from it in the time of William the Good; that no French soldier or official should set foot in Messina; lastly, that it should be governed by an Italian, chosen by the king; and from these the Cardinal could not prevail upon them to deduct one iota. Whether, as some write, he referred to the king, who refused any terms but those of an unconditional surrender; or whether Charles's mind were so well known to the Cardinal as to render such reference needless; he decidedly negatived the treaty, to the great indignation of the citizens; and one of the most impetuous of the people who resented and clamoured at this rejection, addressing himself to Gherardo, thus reproached him: "Behold the uprightness of the pastors who counsel us to bare our necks before the executioner, in order that he may show us



mercy! And how many hours would Charles's mercy last? Away from us, hearts of flint, crooked minds, insidious tongues; you sold us to the French; we have redeemed ourselves with our own arms; and now that we offer you the moderate sovereignty of our beautiful Sicily, it is scorned by Martin, who acts as the tool of the French prince, not as the vicar of the mild and loving Saviour. Fear then the justice of Christ! And thou, do thou return to the Angevin tyrant, and tell him that neither lions nor foxes shall ever again set foot in Messina!" Alarmed at the menacing aspect of the people, Gherardo hastened to leave the city, having previously, however, excommunicated it—commanded all the clergy to leave it within three days, and summoned the heads of the municipality to appear, within forty days, at the papal Court.<sup>1</sup>

I have passed over in silence an epistle of Pope Martin, stated by Giachetto Villani and by the

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 41. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 370, 371. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 66, 67. Giachetto Malespini, ch. 211. Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida, p. 267. Nic. Speciale, book v. ch. 9. The reply of Alaimo, and the reproaches of the Messinese to the Legate when the negotiations were broken off, have been principally extracted from Neocastro and Malaspina.

History of the Conspiracy to have been read by Gherardo to the Messinese, but which is not mentioned by the historians most worthy of belief, and which is full of insulting expressions, in opposition to the high-sounding style of the Court of Rome, to the spirit of the bull which deputed Cardinal Gherardo, and to the whole course of conduct pursued in the commencement of the struggle by Charles and by the Pope. I therefore conclude it to have been fabricated by these authors, who, as I have elsewhere observed, compose their traditions concerning the Vespers with but little skill. Nor is the supposition more probable,<sup>1</sup> that Gherardo suggested to Charles to assent to the treaty with Messina, and afterwards, when he was master of the city, to violate its conditions; for although the Messinese, flushed with hope, were irritated by the repulse of the legate, all Sicily afterwards, according to Speciale, admired his frank and honest dealing, which procured for him in the island the reputation of a saint.<sup>2</sup>

His return to the camp, humiliated and dejected, excited so much fury in the troops impatient for the rich plunder of the city, that,

<sup>1</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 66.      <sup>2</sup> Nic. Speciale, book v. ch. 9.

without waiting for orders, they rushed tumultuously to storm the walls, and were thus the more easily repelled.<sup>1</sup> The Sicilians also gave distinguished proofs of valour in the lesser, but well-directed, attacks which were afterwards renewed day by day; for Charles, perceiving that the city would not yield to menaces alone, wished to make her more feelingly aware that the knife was at her throat. The effect produced was, however, directly contrary to that which he desired, for the vigilance of the citizens baffled all the arts of the enemy whose ranks were thinned by their arrows, and fortune, favouring them in every encounter, inspired them with the confidence of victory, while it damped the hopes of Charles's soldiers. It was in vain that the king, recalling his troops from Milazzo, encamped them in the suburb of St. John, where, now that the city has extended beyond its ancient limits, are situated the Priory, and the suburb of St. Leo, and thus girded it round on the north and south, where the ground seemed most favourable to hostile attacks, leaving unenclosed only the steep hill defended by the castle of Matagrifone. This was matter of

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 371.

indifference to the Messinese, except that fearing the pressure of want, owing to the increased difficulty of obtaining supplies, they adopted the harsh but necessary expedient of sending out of the city the refuse of the people least capable of bearing arms, who, wandering helplessly through the surrounding country, fell a useless prey into the hands of the enemy. At the cost of much bloodshed they renewed a furious assault, on the 15th of August, upon the Capperina, and, on the 2d of September, upon the walls to the northward, and being always repulsed, they vented their anger by again ravaging the country. Even the churches were not exempted from plunder; they laid violent hands upon the priests and carried off the consecrated utensils, the crosses and effigies of the Holy Virgin, to the camp, where they were treated as vile objects of barter;<sup>1</sup> acts of impotent fury, which must have proved to all persons of penetration how completely the king despaired of the enterprise.

Charles's soul was, moreover, troubled by gloomy tidings. Peter of Aragon had come from Africa

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 41. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 371—373.

with a numerous fleet, and had been crowned King of Sicily in Palermo; the courage of the Sicilians was thereby redoubled, their forces were assembling, and their eyes turned towards the besieged city, upon which neither hunger nor warlike operations appeared to produce any effect. It was therefore resolved to attempt one general and final assault.<sup>1</sup> It was the 14th of September; at day-break the army, ranged in a circle, advanced in order of battle from the hill and from the plain, with innumerable engines of war; the barons in glittering armour rode through the ranks, and Charles exhorted his troops not so much to fight, as—so he exclaimed—to butcher the vile burghers. At the same time the fleet bore down upon the mouth of the port before a brisk north wind; foremost in the line was an immense vessel, full of soldiers and of engines, and protected with hides against all danger of fire, which it was hoped would break through the chain by its weight and the violence of the shock. But Alaimo had employed the greatest care in strengthening it; and within it were ranged fourteen galleys manned with fiery youths, and amongst them six vessels laden with

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 14.

catapults and other machines. Outside the chain, and below the level of the water, were stretched strong nets to break the impetus of the hostile vessels; and on the shore was raised a wooden redoubt, garrisoned by the bravest of the men-at-arms, amply provided with weapons of every description.

It was here that the conflict first began. The large vessel, bearing down upon Alaimo's redoubt, became entangled in the nets; the Messinese poured upon her a tempest of stones and darts, threw fire upon her deck, lacerated her sails, and, while she still held out, the wind shifting to the south, compelled her to withdraw all shattered and disabled, and with her the whole of the fleet. All the energy of the defenders could therefore now be employed to repel the varied and terrific assault directed upon the city from the land side by the countless forces of the enemy.

They caused the cats<sup>1</sup> to play against the walls,

<sup>1</sup> Machines for breaching walls ending in the form of a cat's head, like the battering rams of the ancients.

The same name was also given to a strong shed, moveable by means of wheels or otherwise, used to shelter the assailants while they attacked the walls. This shed was composed of a grating of stout beams covered with planks, lined with leather, and sometimes surmounted with a layer of earth to deaden and sustain



to form a breach, or approached their foot to undermine them; and where they were lowest, scaling-ladders were placed, and cranes<sup>1</sup> brought up, in order to reach their summit; while other bands endeavoured, by discharges of arrows, to clear the battlements of the defenders, who responded vigorously with showers of stones and missiles, pouring boiling oil and pitch upon those who approached the nearest, and hurling masses of stone and Greek fire upon the scaling-ladders. During the varying fortunes of this desperate conflict, a few succeeded in mounting the wall, but only to encounter death in a different form, being despatched with the sword in close combat instead of being shot down from a distance. Alaimo,

the shock of whatever might be thrown from the walls by the besieged. See d'Escot, ch. 161, &c., and Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 110, who mention them, the former at the siege of Gerona, the latter at that of Agosta.\*

<sup>1</sup> Small wooden towers, moving upon wheels placed in the interior, upon the top of which was fastened a beam, which when the tower approached the walls of a town could be lowered upon them like a drawbridge, to give passage to the assailants. It thus resembled a crane extending its long neck, and it was properly speaking the beam which was called a crane or "telone." See Niccolò Speciale, book ii. ch. 22, of the siege of the castle of Aci.

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\* This species of shed was in England also called a "sow."—*Trans.*

fire flashing from his eyes, was everywhere to be seen—at the palisades, on the battlements, wherever the need was greatest or the danger most imminent. He watched the movements of the enemy, directed the whole of the defence, brought fresh combatants to relieve the wearied, furnished arms, exhorted, and fought. With him the captains of the troops and the most noted of the citizens exerted themselves to the utmost to meet this desperate crisis. One feeling animated the whole people. “Long life to Messina and Liberty!” was the cry; and breath returned to their exhausted bosoms, and double vigour to their arms, while wounds and death were alike unheeded. Women were seen fearlessly speeding through the dense cloud of missiles, their aprons full of stones, or laden with bundles of arrows, or food and flasks of wine for the refreshment of their gallant brethren; while some, pointing to the infants in their arms, reminded those around, that if they did not maintain the conflict even to their latest breath, they would behold them slaughtered by the ruthless enemy, the sacred virgins defiled, chastity violated, massacre and dishonour everywhere rampant, and Messina levelled with the ground.

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Thus animated on the one side by the holiest affections, on the other by thirst of plunder and fear of their leader, the hostile forces wrestled with each other from dawn till twilight ; but the fury of the assault expended itself in vain against the gallant city. Around the foot of the walls was wreathed a ghastly girdle of broken engines, shivered arms, and soiled and mutilated corpses stiffening in the convulsed attitudes of death.

The slaughter of the French far exceeded that of the Italians in the hostile ranks, because the citizens, recognising the latter by their ensigns, sought to spare them in the discharge of their missiles. The king, burning with rage at the ineffectual assaults, was watching them from the threshold of the church of Santa Maria, when a certain Doctor Bonaccorso took so true an aim at him from the walls with a catapult, that two French knights who at that moment, either by chance or by an act of heroic self-devotion, had advanced in front of him, were slain by the discharge, and the king retreated precipitately from the spot, even his indomitable courage forsaking him in this reverse of fortune. At length, perceiving that his troops, bleeding and exhausted,

were everywhere giving way, and that evening was closing in upon this fatal day, he commanded the rappel to be sounded. Thereupon, a shout arose from the whole circle of the walls, and the citizens, rushing impetuously forth, pursued the foe retreating as if in flight, taunting them, cutting them down, and plundering the corpses even before the very eyes of the king.

In the city there were mutual embracings, tears of joy, exultation such as the world cannot equal. Alaimo, the hero of Messina, recounted the feats of prowess, gave thanks to the most valiant in their country's name, and amongst them to the women, some of whom had received honourable wounds in the conflict. Comparatively little sorrow was mingled with these rejoicings, owing to the citizens having fought under cover. In the night, a band under the guidance of a daring warrior named Leucio, satiated their thirst for vengeance with a further slaughter of the enemy, surprising those who slept, restraining the waking through fear, and returning to the city laden with spoil.

Equal to the exultation in the city was the grief and fear produced in the camp by that bloody day.

Charles flung himself down, says Neocastro, like a vanquished bull, borne to the earth less by fatigue than by rage and grief. He gazed around, and beheld nothing but discouragement; he thought of Messina, of Sicily, of Peter of Aragon, and his bosom was torn by the bitterest mortification. He did not again renew the assault, but established strong posts to guard the entrances of the town, and placed catapults to hurl a tempest of stones against the gates.<sup>1</sup> The proud monarch even abased himself to tempt the fidelity of Alaimo, not comprehending that such exalted virtue could not stoop to the deep degradation of treachery. He secretly offered him a general amnesty for Messina, from which only six of the most turbulent of the citizens should be excepted; and for himself ten thousand ounces of gold, with two hundred ounces of yearly revenue, and whatever honours and dignities he might demand; sending him at the same time a blank parchment, with the royal seal and signature, for him to inscribe his own terms. But Alaimo, returning him a haughty answer, continued to encourage the citizens, and to provide

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 14. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 42.

for the defence. For the relief of the lower orders, who were suffering from the strictness of the blockade, he opened the granaries, of which his foresight had at first concealed the existence. There was, however, no great pressure of want, especially as they were assisted by the fisheries, which were so abundant as to be regarded by Neocastro in the light of a miracle.<sup>1</sup> Messina, triumphant, already mocked at the siege, when the advent of Peter of Aragon brought it to a speedy and joyful termination.

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 43.

## CHAPTER VIII.

CAUSE OF THE WEAKNESS OF THE GOVERNMENT INSTITUTED ON THE REVOLUTION.—THE THOUGHTS OF THE SICILIANS TURN TO PETER OF ARAGON—HIS DEPARTURE FROM CATALONIA FOR AFRICA—MILITARY ACHIEVEMENTS, AND EMBASSY TO ROME.—PARLIAMENT AT PALERMO, IN WHICH PETER IS ELECTED KING—HE GAINS OVER HIS FOLLOWERS, AND ACCEPTS THE CROWN—COMES TO TRAPANI, AND IS PROCLAIMED KING AT PALERMO.—MEASURES TAKEN TO SUCCOUR MESSINA.—ORATORS SENT BY PETER TO CHARLES.—LAST FEATS OF ARMS OF THE SIEGE—CHARLES RAISES IT WITH SHAME AND LOSS.—JUNE—SEPTEMBER, 1282.

THE weakness of the government when Charles directed his forces against Sicily, is a subject worthy of consideration, at a time when so complete a revolution had but just been effected, and when the municipalities were in vigorous operation. But, in the latter, men, seeing each other face to face, readily came to an understanding with regard to their common necessities, and the captains and popular councils directed their forces to immediate action. But with the nation at large it was otherwise; the parliaments proclaim-

ing the sovereignty of the Church, had neglected to create a supreme, or, as we should now call it, an executive power; and thus, in the hour of their greatest need, the force of authority was wanting. The parliament had it not, because it did not declare itself permanent, and because, moreover, the power of the state, passing at that time from the hands of the people to those of the nobles, could not be energetically wielded by any during the period of transition. At first, as we have said, republican sentiments and democratic institutions everywhere prevailed; but as the original impulse exhausted itself, the baronial party gradually obtained the preponderance, partly from the influence of custom and the advantages of property, and partly because, on beholding the hostile attitude of Rome, and the warlike preparations of Charles, the people no longer thought of retaining the government of the state, but only of escaping from the unhallowed yoke of bondage, and therefore confided themselves to the direction of those who appeared the wisest and most powerful. Hence, the first Captain of Messina was succeeded by Alaimo, who was hailed to the same office by all the towns along a con-

siderable tract of coast to the north and to the east; hence Macalda, Alaimo's wife, supplied his place at Catania;<sup>1</sup> hence, if in the first parliaments we read only of syndics and captains of the people, in those that followed Speciale vaunts the number of the assembled nobles and men of wisdom.<sup>2</sup> This led to another, and still greater change. Amongst those of the higher ranks, some perhaps may have been in the interests of Peter, owing to prior intrigues; the greater part recognised the claims of Constance; and all preferred monarchy to the republic, and could see no better means of safety in such imminent peril, than obedience to one individual. They therefore determined to call him to their aid, and confiding in this measure, desisted from every other daring enterprise, while the fate of Messina hung in the balance, and with it the common cause of liberty, only succouring her with the forces which had shut themselves up in the city, and by frequent adventurous efforts to throw in secretly both soldiers and provisions,<sup>3</sup> to

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 43.

<sup>2</sup> Book i. ch. 8, 9.

<sup>3</sup> These succours, somewhat slurred over by Neocastro, are mentioned by Speciale, book i. ch. 7, 16.

enable her to hold out against the hostile army until the arrival of Peter.

The difference of sentiment between the people and the nobles, and the gradual transfer of the sovereign power from the former to the latter, requiring both time and opportunity for their full development, caused the Sicilians to waver long, divided and irresolute, before it was finally decided to invite the King of Aragon. Negotiations were first begun privately by his partisans, not publicly by the cities. Hence, we have but vague notices of their original commencement, which is variously related by the several historians, few of whom knew, or liked to reveal the truth.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro does not merit entire credence when he attributes them to the Palermitans, and relates that, alarmed at beholding the hostility of the Pope and Messina still loyal to the house of Anjou, they resolved, on the persuasion of one Hugh Talach, to throw themselves into the arms of the King of Aragon, and that so hastily, that Nicholas Coppola, their orator, set sail for Catalonia on the 27th of April. Neocastro falls into an error in his computation of time, in saying that Coppola having reached the Balearic Islands in eight days, was driven by stress of weather to the coast of Africa, where he found Peter, whom he himself states to have quitted Spain the 17th of May, and whom we know, upon better authority, to have landed in Africa the 28th of June. He continues to weave his tale by relating that the king, not choosing to embark in the enterprise without knowing the mind of the Messinese, replied, that he would send some confidential messengers to ascertain it, and till then



It appears certain, however, that after the revolution, Peter, conjointly with his partisans in the island, made every effort to turn it to his own advantage, and that he desired Sicily far more eagerly than Sicily desired him.

The King of Aragon was still silently arming, when the standard of revolt was raised in the island, and thus his original designs remained for ever buried in the depths of his soul, for such could hardly be the pretended African war, which it would have been acting most unwisely on his part to conceal so pertinaciously from the Pope and the King of France, with the certainty of thus awakening their suspicions. It appears, moreover, that some secret practices had been carried on between him and the Prince of Constantina; who, threatened by the King of Tunis, implored Christian aid, and offered to recognise the supremacy of Peter, thus opening a way for him to

would make no promises. Thus he gives these practices the date and colouring most favourable to his native city, not perceiving that the real glory of Messina was so great, that she should have disdained all borrowed additions to it. Speciale, d'Esclot, Montaner, and Saba Malaspina, speak only of the public embassy, to be hereafter mentioned.

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 361. *Chron. S. Bert. in Martene and Durand, Thes. Nov. An. vol. iii. p. 762.*

extensive conquests in Africa, where the numerous Christians who fought in the pay of the King of Tunis would not fail to come over to the side of the Aragonese.<sup>1</sup> Whether, therefore, Peter were really attempting to play a twofold game at once in Africa and in Sicily, or whether he undertook the former expedition only as a stepping-stone to the latter, he began in some degree to discover his designs, by sending an orator to the Pope to request assistance in the war against the Saracens; and receiving no answer from Martin, towards the close of spring, when tidings had doubtless reached him of the events of Sicily, he hastened the completion of all his preparations for war. The work of a month, says Montaner, was accomplished in a week, under the eye of the king. He assembled a small force of cavalry, and a considerable one of light infantry, all picked men;<sup>2</sup> the greater part of the army was assembled at Port Fangos, near Tortosa, on the 20th of May,<sup>3</sup> and then Peter devoted himself with extreme diligence to the setting in order of his kingdom,

<sup>1</sup> Montaner, ch. 44. D'Escot, ch. 77, 78.

<sup>2</sup> D'Escot, ch. 77, 78. Montaner, ch. 46, 48.

<sup>3</sup> Zurita, Ann. of Aragon, book iv. ch. 13. See also Geste. de' Conti di Barcellona, ch. 28, in the *Marca Hispanica* of Baluzio.

and of his royal household. He hastened the marriage of his son Alfonso, with Eleanor, daughter of Edward I. of England, deputing the Bishops of Tarragona and Valencia as his proxies, to bestow his paternal consent.<sup>1</sup> He appointed this same Alfonso, and his Queen, Constance, Regents of the State, and made his will, declaring Alfonso heir of the kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia, and of the county of Barcelona; we read, moreover, that he ceded the immediate sovereignty of them to his son, calling, with the utmost secrecy, as witnesses to his renunciation, Peter Queralto, Gilaberto de Cruyllas, John of Procida, Blasco Perez de Azlor, and Bernard de Mopahon: an act counselled by his anticipation of the measures which the Court of Rome would adopt against him, or more probably, feigned after his deposition, to elude its operation in form, by showing that the crown had been ceded to the son before the Pope had thought of taking it from the father.<sup>2</sup> Finally, on the 3d of

<sup>1</sup> Diploma given at Port Sangos, or Fangos, the 1st June, 1282, in Rymer's *Fœdera*, vol. ii. p. 210.

<sup>2</sup> Zurita, *Ann. of Aragon*, book iv. ch. 19, 20. Several documents confirm the existence of this secret donation, leaving us however in doubt as to whether it were really made by the king in 1282, or only feigned in 1283. These are:—

1. A brief of Martin IV. to Philip the Bold, from Orvieto, the

June,<sup>1</sup> having taken leave of the queen, and bestowed his blessing with much tenderness upon his children, he set sail with the fleet; the destination of the expedition still remaining a secret. When

10th September, 1283, in the Archives of France, J, 714, 5. The king had sent two ambassadors to inquire whether the renunciation of Peter in favour of Alfonso would be any obstacle to the cession of the kingdom of Aragon to one of his sons, for which negotiations were then pending. The Pope replied that this exception had not been alleged, but that in any case he and the College of Cardinals regarded it as futile and valueless.

2. A remonstrance from the archbishops, bishops, and other prelates, masters of the Templars, Hospitallers, and other religious orders, counts, viscounts, barons, universities, towns, and, in short, from all the inhabitants of the kingdoms of Aragon and Valencia and of the county of Barcelona, addressed to Pope Honorius IV. and to the College of Cardinals, to entreat the Pope to revoke the cession that Martin (being deceived) had made of them to Charles of Valois, and to let Alfonso reign in peace. The reasons alleged were, that James the Conqueror, with the consent of his son Peter, then in bad health, had made a donation of the kingdoms to his grandson Alfonso; that on the day of the coronation of Peter in Saragossa, all the barons had sworn after his death to obey Alfonso; that Peter, according to the custom of Spain, had bestowed his estates on his son, *inter vivos*, declaring that he would hold them from him, enjoying the usufruct of them during his life; that, finally, he had bequeathed them by testament to the said Alfonso; and that all these acts were antecedent to the Sicilian expedition, and to any other offence that Peter might have given to the Holy See. Having thus proved Alfonso's right, they maintain that he was in no way fallen from it, as he had taken no part in the Sicilian expedition; adding, that the nation also was in ignorance of the object of the

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<sup>1</sup> Zurita, Ann. of Aragon, book iv. ch. 19, 20. I have adhered to this historian for dates.

they were twenty miles distant from the shore, the admiral, passing in a boat from ship to ship throughout the fleet, gave orders to steer for Port Mahon, and gave each captain a sealed packet, to be opened when they left that port. They remained there a few days, until Peter, having received advices from Constantina, gave orders to sail; and then the *Almossarif* of Minorca, a Saracen and constantly threatened by the arms of Aragon, divining the real object of the expedition from the course of the vessels and other indications, sent notice of it to Africa by means of a *saettia* that passed unobserved through the Catalan fleet,<sup>1</sup> which latter, on the 28th of June,<sup>2</sup> arrived at the port of Collo, in the province of

undertaking, and believed in good faith that the hostile preparations were directed against the enemies of Christianity. This remonstrance is to be found in the Archives of France, J, 588, 27.

3. The donation to Alfonso is mentioned in the bull of Boniface VIII. dated the 21st June, 1295, by which the kingdoms, as held by Peter, were restored to his son James. Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1295.

<sup>1</sup> Montaner, ch. 49, 50. D'Esclot, ch. 79, 80. Zurita, Ann. of Aragon, book iv. ch. 19, 20. "Almossarif" was the title of the feudatary, or Saracen prince of Minorca, derived perhaps from an Arabic word, signifying "noble, exalted, high in dignity."

<sup>2</sup> Genoese Annals, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. vi. p. 576, and Geste de' Conti di Barcellona, ch. 28, *loc. cit.*

Constantina, bearing an army of between ten and twelve thousand horse and foot.

Here Peter found everything changed, in consequence of the warning which had forestalled him, the loquacity of his Saracen ally, or treachery in some other quarter. The port and town of Collo were abandoned, and he learnt soon after from some Pisan merchants, that the prince was slain, and the town of Constantina in the hands of the enemy ; but the more desperate the enterprise appeared, the more he distinguished himself in the eyes of the Catalans by his daring and judgment ; and by the fascination of glory obtained complete mastery of those independent spirits. Finding the shore silent and deserted, the soldiers suspected treachery on the part of the enemy ; they hesitated even to plunder, and would have refused to enter the town had it not been for the king. With a single companion, he advanced to the gates, dismounted from his horse, placed his ear to the ground to catch the reverberation of the slightest sound, and convinced of the absence of any living creature, he reassured his followers, and was the first to enter. He afterwards rode alone, or with only a slender escort, to reconnoitre



the country, skilfully and rapidly fortified his camp, guarded the passes, watched every movement of the enemy, and when the combat was engaged, fought amongst the foremost, with a courage amounting almost to rashness. We will not attempt to recount his exploits, as the records of them all incline to the marvellous, and besides, differ among themselves; for the ambassadors sent to the Pope, or the soldiers who wrote or related them, exaggerated to a fabulous degree the thousands upon thousands of barbarians, the fearful encounters, the slaughter, the valour of the faithful, and the memorable deeds of the barons; of all which the sum total is briefly this, that incited by religious zeal, and abhorrence of foreign violence, clouds of Arab horsemen darted down upon the Catalans, who, excelling them in discipline and hardihood, repulsed them with great slaughter, but were not in sufficient force to make themselves masters of Constantina, or to penetrate further into the hostile country.<sup>1</sup>

After these feats of arms Peter devised new artifices, suggested by Loria and the other Italian

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* pp. 361, 367. Bart. de Neocastro, *ch.* 17. D'Esclot, *ch.* 80, 83, 89. Montaner, *ch.* 51, 53, 55, 85.

refugees, to win over his own people and at the same time to throw dust in the eyes of the Pope, that he might not strike before the time; to justify the enterprise he had in contemplation, in the eyes of the other European sovereigns; and to conquer the final hesitation of the Sicilians. Summoning therefore the leaders of the army, with their consent he despatched William of Castelnovo and Peter Queralto with two galleys to the Pope, to inform him of the defeat of the infidels, and to request the favours usually granted in such wars—the presence of a papal legate, the proclamation of the cross, the protection of the Church for his own territories and those of his subjects in Spain, and the grant of the ecclesiastical tithes which were already collected and laid by. He reflected that these privileges, if granted, would render him strong enough to discover himself without danger; and if refused, would furnish him with a pretext to divert his forces to some other object.<sup>1</sup> But the orators sailing from

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 375. Montaner, *ch.* 52. D'Esclot, *ch.* 84, 85. *Geste de' Conti di Barcellona*, *ch.* 28, *loc. cit.* Diploma of Peter of Aragon, in Rymer's *Fœdera*, vol. ii. p. 208. Zurita, *book iv.* *ch.* 21. Montaner and d'Esclot record this mission to the Pope as having been despatched in all sincerity.



Africa with intent to present themselves at Montefiascone, where Pope Martin had taken refuge from the heat of summer, or from the murmurs against the Guelf party,<sup>1</sup> which had already begun to agitate Italy, put in to Palermo, as if compelled by stress of weather, while the barons and syndics of the towns assembled in Parliament were struggling with the overwhelming difficulties of their position.<sup>2</sup>

In the church of St. Maria dell' Ammiraglio, now called della Martorana, a noble monument of Norman times, sate the Sicilian parliament— anxious and alarmed for the fate of Messina, objecting to every proposed measure as insufficient, and turning irresolutely from one to the other, as is frequently the case in times of urgent peril. Some, as if despairing of the cause, already spoke of flying from their unhappy country, when Queralto, immediately on his arrival, presented himself before the parliament to point out a way of escape, counselling them to offer the vacant

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* p. 376.

<sup>2</sup> Anon. *Chron. Sic.* ch. 40. This instigation of the Sicilians is ascribed to Peter by Nangis, in Duchesne, *Hist. Franc. Script.* vol. v. p. 539; and also by Pope Martin, in his accusation, recorded in Raynald, *Ann. Eccl.* 1283, § 21.

throne to Peter of Aragon, a prince of great capacity, and equal valour, who was at hand with an army of veteran warriors, and supported by indisputable rights to the crown. This measure, proposed to an assembly, of whom part were accomplices and the rest terrified, was instantly adopted, it being determined to offer the crown to Peter, on condition that he should maintain all the laws, privileges, and usages of the times of William the Good, and should aid Sicily with his own forces until the final expulsion of the enemy.<sup>1</sup> Nicholas Coppola of Palermo, and Pain Porcella, a Catalan,<sup>2</sup> were deputed to be the bearers of this message to Africa, with letters and credentials from all the Sicilian cities. Bartholomew of Neocastro confirms the instigation of the King of Aragon and the predisposition of the Parliament, by simply narrating that John Guercio, knight,

<sup>1</sup> D'Escot, ch. 90, 91.

<sup>2</sup> Anon. Chron. Sic. ch. 40. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 8, 9. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 373, 374. Ann. of Genoa, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. vi. p. 576. Pao. di Pietro, in Muratori, R. I. S. vol. xxvi. agg. p. 37. D'Escot, ch. 87. Montaner, ch. 54. Giach. Malespini, ch. 212. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 69. Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida, *loc. cit.* p. 269. These three last erroneously state John of Procida to have been sent ambassador to Peter.

Francis Longobardo, judge, and professor of civil law, and Raynald de' Limogi, judge, previously despatched from Messina to Palermo to treat of the invitation to Peter, having met the orators of the king in Palermo, speedily concluded the negotiations. While he thus writes, the simple author of the Anonymous Chronicle,<sup>1</sup> mentions Queralto as having landed by chance at Palermo, and the courtier Speciale invents a fable or an allegory, of an ancient seer who suddenly presented himself to harangue the terrified parliament. No one, however, appears to perceive that this *coup de théâtre* was neither the effect of chance nor of miracle, but was the development of the intrigues of the Sicilian nobles with king Peter. If they had plotted ever since the time of Nicholas III., if there be any particle of truth in the machinations of Procida in Sicily, it was in this parliament, and not in the Vespers, that the conspiracy triumphed.

When Castelnuovo and Queralto arrived at Montefiascone, the Pope heard them gladly; receiving it as truth that the armament of the king, which had excited his suspicions, was indeed directed against the Moors. But he was not so

<sup>1</sup> Ch. 44.

ready to grant the favours requested, and therefore availed himself of the usual delays of the Roman Court, alleging besides that the ecclesiastical tithes were destined only for the service of the Holy Land, not for all wars against the Saracens; until the ambassadors in real or feigned indignation, hardly taking leave of the Pope, returned to Africa,<sup>1</sup> being perhaps warned by the cardinals hostile to the French interest, that Peter had nothing to hope from Pope Martin, and would do well to look to his own interests for himself.<sup>2</sup> In Africa the Sicilian orators had already in set terms offered the throne to Peter,<sup>3</sup> who, adhering to the part he had resolved to play, replied that he loved Sicily, and perceived with pleasure her

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* pp. 378, 379. Montaner, ch. 56. D'Esclot, ch. 86.

<sup>2</sup> D'Esclot, *loc. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Geste de' Conti di Barcellona*, ch. 28, *loc. cit.* Montaner, ch. 54, 57, relates this Sicilian mission stupidly enough, making the ambassadors come with black sails to their ships, dressed in black, and weeping bitterly, to throw themselves at the feet of the King of Aragon, imploring his assistance in words of servility and dismay. This tone of abject submission was ill suited to the Sicilians, fresh from the revolution of the Vespers, and coming to offer Peter a very limited sovereignty. D'Esclot, ch. 88, places the ambassadors in a very different light, and quotes the terms upon which the crown was offered, in which he is borne out by the testimony of other historians.

loyalty to the house of Suabia, but that he must have time to reflect upon so important a proposal. Then, assembling the barons and leaders of the host, he propounded it to them, dissembling his own anxious wishes. Some counselled him to proceed at once to this splendid and easy conquest; while others dissuaded him, urging that he would call down the wrath of the Pope and the arms of France upon the kingdom of Aragon; that in seeking to gain a new crown he would peril the old one; that Charles's power was too great; that the soldiers of Aragon were used indeed to combat the Moors, but not such formidable cavalry as his; that wearied and exhausted they required rest and a return to their country; that an attack upon Christians would be repugnant to their feelings; and besides, how could so important a war be undertaken without the sovereign authority of the Cortes of Catalonia and Aragon? For several days Peter kept silence before these objections, nor did he take any notice of the numbers who returned home without even taking leave,<sup>1</sup> but laboured secretly and suc-

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 23. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 12, 13  
Zurita, book iv. ch. 22.

cessfully to win over the leaders of the host to his purposes. No sooner was he secure of them than he replied to the Sicilian orators that he accepted the crown, with all the institutions of the times of William the Good, and promised to afford them succour and defence.<sup>1</sup> He wrote to the King of England, and perhaps to other sovereigns also, that he abandoned the war against the infidels on account of the Pope's refusal of assistance; and that being at the same time called upon by the cities of Sicily, he had resolved on hastening thither, to vindicate the rights of Constance and of his sons. This done, he issued peremptory orders for departure, declaring at the same time that all who chose were free to remain behind, and that if he were abandoned by his companions in arms he would go alone. These arts prevailed and he set sail, followed by the greater number, with twenty galleys, one ship, some lesser vessels, and a small land force.<sup>2</sup>

On the 30th of August, after a voyage of five

<sup>1</sup> D'Esclot, ch. 90.

<sup>2</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 23, 45. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 379. Anon. Chron. Sic. ch. 40. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 13. Giach. Malespini, ch. 212. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 69. See also Montaner, ch. 58, and d'Esclot, ch. 90.



days, he landed at Trapani, to the great joy of the people, and still greater of the nobles, who emulated each other in the performance of all the court ceremonials which were that day revived in Sicily. The barons came on board the king's ship, presented him to the cities, bore upon the points of four lances the canopy of gold and silk under which he walked, and those esteemed themselves most fortunate who held the reins of his courser; while the rest followed on foot, accompanied by youths and maidens singing and dancing to the sound of instruments; and the people, shouting aloud, "cried welcome to their king, sent by Heaven to deliver them from the detested enemy." In this first burst of rejoicing Palmiero Abate presented him with rich gifts, and distributed corn in abundance to the soldiery. On the 4th of September Peter proceeded on horseback to the capital, sending the fleet and baggage thither with Raymond Marquet; and here the people gave themselves up to still greater demonstrations of joy, as being more numerous and foremost in the revolution, and having therefore more to dread from the vengeance of the house of Anjou. They came out full six miles to meet the king and

escort him in triumph; and so loud were the applause of the people, the shouts of the soldiers, and the blast of the trumpets at the entrance of the city, that they were heard, says Saba Malaspina, as far as Morreale, a town four miles distant on the heights to the south-west of Palermo. Amid these overflowings of joy, Peter entered the palace, and his followers found liberal hospitality in the houses of the citizens.<sup>1</sup>

From feasting, illuminations, holiday-makings, and presents in money, which latter Montaner states the king to have refused, they proceeded to a more august ceremony. "On the third day," says d'Esclot, "the barons, knights, and representatives of the cities and townships assembled in parliament at Palermo, of whom Peter demanded whether the offer of the crown, made to him by the ambassadors in Africa, had indeed been decreed by them; a knight replied that it was so; and the parliament having with one voice confirmed his words, he resumed, 'Let

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 45. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 13. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 379. D'Esclot, ch. 90, 91. Montaner, ch. 60. Gio. Villani, and Giachetto Malespini, *loc cit.*; Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida, p. 270. All these Chronicles differ as to detail.



the king now deign to grant the privileges which were enjoyed in the days of good King William, and he will cause his name to be for ever remembered with blessings, and will win over the heart of every Sicilian to his will.' Peter granted the privileges, promising to confirm them by diplomas, and thereupon the assembled parliament rose from their seats, and swore fealty to him, and a great banquet was served up to the king and the knights;"<sup>1</sup> but I do not believe that, as some have written, Peter was then crowned with the crown of the kings of Sicily, the ceremony being performed by the bishop of Cefalù.<sup>2</sup> Another noble epistle was then addressed to the Pope, in the name of Sicily, in terms more measured than the first remonstrance, as became the new monarchical and baronial government, which, after rehearsing

<sup>1</sup> D'Escot, ch. 91. The parliament is mentioned by Montaner, ch. 60; and still more distinctly by the author of the *Geste de' Conti di Barcellona*, ch. 28, *loc. cit.*

<sup>2</sup> I have come to this conclusion after a careful examination of the monuments and historians of the period, of whom Giachetto Malespini, Gio. Villani, who copies him, and Montaner, affirm the coronation to have taken place; while Niccolò Speciale, Saba Malaspina, and Bernard d'Escot, who record all the particulars of the coming of Peter, are silent concerning it; and the *Cronaca Siciliana*, in di Gregorio, Bibl. Aragon, vol. i. p. 270, says expressly, that owing to the absence of the Archbishops of Palermo and Morreale, *Peter non fu coronatu sì non chiamatu di tu populu.*

at length the enormities of the foreign tyranny, touched upon the suzerainty offered after the Vespers to the Pontiff and refused by him, whereupon the nation had turned itself to another prince, and, in lieu of the vicar of St. Peter, Almighty God had sent them another Peter, so says the epistle, which goes on sternly to remind Martin that he, a Frenchman, having ascended the Apostle's chair, was bound to give ear to truth, not to the passions of party—to turn aside neither to the right hand nor to the left, and not to proceed with such impetuous violence against the Sicilians.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, all those most deeply compromised in the revolution assembled in council with the king, and all the exiles of Apulia who crowded full of hope to the new court, deliberated upon the mode of attacking the enemy,<sup>2</sup> which they were the more anxious to do that many already murmured privately at the sorry appearance of the Catalan soldiery, ill-equipped, sun-burnt, and toil-worn from the African campaign;

<sup>1</sup> This document is reproduced in the Anon. Chron. Sic. ch. 40, and elsewhere; and is mentioned in Raynald, Ann. Eccl. 1282, § 19.

<sup>2</sup> Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 379.

so that the Sicilians regarded them as capable of affording little assistance against the cavalry of France, and were only at length undeceived by experience.<sup>1</sup> Having therefore resolved to count upon their own arms alone, aided by the military counsels of the king, the Sicilians anxiously entreated to be led against Messina, for all longed for the liberation of the noble city.<sup>2</sup> Peter, taking advantage of this enthusiasm, at once issued a proclamation, summoning every man, from the age of fifteen to sixty, to present himself at Palermo within a month, armed, and bringing with him provisions for thirty days.<sup>3</sup> He himself meanwhile advanced rapidly with the lightest of the troops along the road to Nicosia and Randazzo, the other squadrons following as best they might, so soon as their numbers were made up; while the fleet had orders to sail in the direction of the Straits. It was manifest, therefore, that the design was to starve Charles in

<sup>1</sup> D'Esclot, ch. 91, and Montaner, ch. 64, state this; the former of the Palermitans, the latter of the Messinese.

<sup>2</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Montaner, ch. 62. D'Esclot, ch. 92, states Randazzo to have been named as the place of meeting.

his camp, cutting off his communications with Calabria by sea, as well as his power of foraging in the island by occupying the hills; a counsel attributed to John of Procida by those who make him the hero of the tragedy of the Vespers. It is a matter of historic fact that Peter, having thus disposed of his forces, made a formal declaration of war, and for this purpose despatched Peter Queralto, Ruy Ximenes de Luna, and William Aymerich judge of Barcelona, with an armed escort, to Charles.<sup>1</sup>

They sent by two Carmelite friars to ask a safe-conduct from Charles,<sup>2</sup> who, in the expectation that he would soon have the right to speak as a conqueror, replied to them that in two days he would give it, and issued orders for the general assault of the 14th of September, of which the result was so fatal to him. On the second day after the battle, although he still kept his

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 16, 17. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 45. Anon. Chron. Sic. ch. 41. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 379. D'Esclot, ch. 92. Montaner, ch. 61, 63. Giachetto Malespini, ch. 212. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 70. Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida, p. 271. I have taken the names of the ambassadors from d'Esclot.

<sup>2</sup> D'Esclot, ch. 92. Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 45.

bed, overpowered with fatigue and exhaustion, burning with fever and still more with rage,<sup>1</sup> he consented to see the ambassadors, who had already arrived in the camp, where they had been courteously received and treated with homely hospitality, and now, strictly guarded, were awaiting his pleasure.<sup>2</sup>

Queralto having been admitted to the presence of the king, who was seated in his bed upon coverings of costly silk, presented his credentials; but Charles cut short all ceremonies by saying, "Speak out at once what you have to say;" and, on Queralto giving him a letter from Peter, he flung it down upon the bed-clothes without looking at it, in feverish impatience to hear the words of the Catalan. The latter therefore briefly delivered his master's message, demanding of the Count of Anjou and Provence that he should evacuate the territory of Sicily, unjustly occupied and atrociously oppressed by him, and in aid of which the King of Aragon now came forward, as

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 45. Saba Malaspina, Cont. p. 380.

<sup>2</sup> D'Escot, *loc. cit.*, describes the lodging provided for them in a church, without beds or bed-clothes, but with abundance of hay; and the food furnished them, consisting of six brown loaves, two flasks of wine, two roasted pigs, and a caldron of soup.

her rightful lord, to vindicate the claims of his sons. At these words the aged monarch was seized with the convulsive shiverings of fever, and remained silent. Then gnawing his stick, as he was wont to do when his fury became excessive, he answered menacingly in broken sentences, that Sicily belonged neither to him nor to Peter of Aragon, but to the Holy Church of Rome; that it was his to defend her, and that he should know how to make the daring invader repent his audacity. These, and similar haughty words, were, according to other chroniclers, written to Peter by him;<sup>1</sup> and, in the mean time, in order to appear indifferent, or to deceive both them and the Messinese, he suffered these same ambassadors

<sup>1</sup> This first embassy is variously recorded by the several contemporary writers; but the substance of all is, that Charles of Anjou being at the siege of Messina, Peter of Aragon, already hailed King of Sicily at Palermo, sent to him, enjoining him immediately to evacuate the island; and that Charles in a transport of rage, retorted the injunction upon Peter, with many menaces. Saba Malaspina, pp. 379—381, quotes a letter, which he calls short, but which is long, from Peter to Charles, and the answer of the latter by word of mouth. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 17; Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 45, 49; Montaner, ch. 61; and Bernard d'Esclot, ch. 92, 93, only mention the embassy without speaking of any letters. According to them, Peter grounded his claim on the right of his wife and sons, and the election of the Sicilians.



to proceed to the city to propose a truce of eight days; which, however, was a useless measure, for Alaimo, not knowing the ambassadors, repulsed them, and they therefore returned to the French camp, where they were detained without receiving any answer until the siege was raised. The Messinese, who had not believed Queralto's tidings of the coming of the King of Aragon, were certified of it a few days later by Nicholas de' Palizzi of Messina and Andrew of Procida, both exiled nobles, sent by the king to their assistance with five hundred crossbowmen from the Balearic Islands; who, crossing by narrow and difficult paths over the hills at the back of the city, on the side not yet blockaded by the enemy, presented themselves by night at the Capperina, where their leaders being recognised, they were received with joy, and displayed the royal standard of Aragon upon the walls of Messina.<sup>1</sup>

Ever since the first arrival of the ambassadors, the enemies had again held counsel together, to deliberate no longer concerning the assault or

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 17. Montaner, ch. 62, says, that the king sent into Messina 2,000 "Almugaveri," a species of militia, of which mention will be made in Chapter IX.

blockade of the town, but concerning their own safety; for they had obtained information by a trusty spy that many light galleys armed with Catalans and Sicilians had issued from the port of Palermo, and Arrighino de' Mari, Charles's admiral, represented to him in the strongest terms the impossibility of defending himself, for in three days the enemy would be upon him, to sink and burn his transports. Opinions were now as various as the case was difficult. At once to encounter the fleet, and attack the King of Aragon; to encamp in some strong position near the city, with the paid archers, dismissing the feudal militia; to prevent the enemy in occupying the passes of the hills; to continue to press the siege with the whole army, till they had exhausted their supplies, which were still sufficient for two months; such were the measures between which the fiercest speakers hesitated. Pandolfo, Count of Acerra, on the other hand, and many with him, pointed out that all hope of reducing the city was at an end, with an army discouraged, exhausted, and thinned by disease and by the departure of many of the feudal militia; while both the courage and numbers of their opponents



were increased by the warlike fame of the King of Aragon, who would know well how to make use of the Sicilians in the mountains; and the sea, in the intervals of the autumnal tempests, would be held by the enemies, masters of a secure harbour; while the Neapolitan vessels would be shattered on these unsheltered shores. And who, meanwhile, would bridle Reggio, in which rebellious humours already begun to show themselves? and how would they be able to retire if the extremity of Calabria were to break out into insurrection? They added, besides, that the supplies of Calabria were exhausted, while they themselves had reduced the country around Messina to a desert; and that the army would perish worn out by hunger and perpetual conflicts, and besieged in its turn between the sea, the mountains, and the indomitable city. After a prolonged debate, these representations carried the day, and the return of the army was resolved upon,<sup>1</sup> but kept secret for the time.

<sup>1</sup> Saba Malaspina, *Cont.* pp. 381—383. Bart. de Neocastro, *ch.* 46. Gio. Villani, *book vii. ch.* 75. *Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida*, p. 273. Fra. Tolomeo of Lucca, *Hist. ecc.* *book xxiv. ch.* 6, in Muratori, *R. I. S.* *vol. xi. p.* 1188. *Life of Martin IV.* in Muratori, *R. I. S.* *vol. iii. part i. p.* 608. D'Esclot, *ch.* 93, 94,

Charles vented his mortification in absurd and desperate acts. He let loose his followers for a final scouring of the surrounding country, which fell chiefly upon the sacred edifices, as hitherto the least injured, and was carried so far that even pillars and beams were dragged into the camp, and in the monastery of our Lady of the Stairs they stripped the altars, and destroyed and defiled everything. The king then, flying into the opposite extreme, promised the Messinese a full pardon, and the concession of all their demands, if they would only return to their allegiance to his name; proffers which they rejected with scorn and derision.<sup>1</sup> He even attempted treachery, intriguing with the judge, Henry de Parisio; the notary, Simon del Tempio; John Schaldapidochu, and a Roman, for the secret introduction of his followers into the city; but the conspirators were detected and brought to the block. The suspicions of the people of Messina being thus excited, they tumultuously demanded the execution of Frederick di Falcone,

mentions this counsel only. Montaner, ch. 65, 66, speaks also of the fear of disturbances in Calabria, and perhaps even in the Angevin army also.

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 49.

who had, perhaps, recommended surrender, exclaiming that this crime was enough; and menaced also Baldwin Mussone, the deposed captain, who, hearing of the arrival of Peter, had secretly left the city to go to the king; but the peasants of Monforte, imagining him to have an understanding with the enemy, had arrested and conveyed him back to Messina. Alaimo saved the lives of both by imprisoning them in the Castle of Matagrifone.<sup>1</sup>

Having lingered a few days over these vain projects, Charles experienced still greater chagrin on learning the condition of the city from a Moor, who, having come forth from the gates in the guise of a beggar and being taken by the soldiers, asserted the citizens to be firmly resolved on continuing the defence, adding fables of his own composition of inexhaustible supplies of provisions, squadrons newly formed, and designs against the life of the king of the most imminent and atrocious character, concerted between five hundred Spanish horsemen and two thousand Messinese foot, who had sworn to make a desperate onslaught upon the royal tents in

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 47, 48.

a sudden sortie of the citizens in which the war-cry would be, "To the camp, to the camp!" Whether it were by design or by chance, these words of the prisoner seemed about to be fulfilled a few days after, and brought the king, who still lingered unwilling to depart, to a final decision.

In order to prevent other forces from entering the city on the track of Palizzi and Andrew of Procida, Charles caused the Archbishop's palace, situated at a short distance from the walls, to be occupied on the 24th of September, and sent thither one of his most trusty followers with two hundred soldiers, who fortifying the already very strong edifice with ditches and stockades, thus commanded the pass of Sant Agostino to the west of the city. Alaimo, however, instantly resolved upon a bold stroke. By his orders, Leucio, and some other equally daring leaders, commanding select bands of youths, issued from the city by night with great secrecy, taking different roads towards the palace; three approached it on three several sides, while Leucio, on the fourth, held back, posting himself in ambush in an olive-yard with his men. When the moon's

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 49.

disc began to appear above the mountains of Calabria, which was the signal appointed by Alaimo, the former, raising a loud shout of "Christ already conquers!" furiously stormed the entrenchments, cut the garrison to pieces and, surprising the captain in his bed, beat him to death with rods, while all who fled towards the olive-yard were slain by Leucio's band. Upon this, the silence of the city was suddenly broken by a loud shout of many voices, "To the camp, to the camp!" by the ringing of the tocsin, the blowing of conches and trumpets, and striking together of planks and caldrons, combining in a horrible din; and the gates being opened the infuriated bands rushed forth. In the camp all was tumult and confusion, the half naked soldiers fled hither and thither amongst the tents giving ear neither to commands nor menaces, some escaping towards the hills, but the greater part towards the shore, believing the dreaded King of Aragon to be already upon them. Charles starting from his sleep, fled some distance towards the sea along with the rest, the ominous cry "To the camp, to the camp!" ringing in his ears, until,

recovering himself, he halted, struck with shame, and exerted himself to calm the tumult. The Messinese returned to the city loaded with spoil, and when daylight appeared, they ostentatiously displayed on the walls the severed arm of the captain of the redoubt, and with words of insult called Charles and his followers to come and behold it.<sup>1</sup>

Charles, after this, delayed no longer to raise the siege; a determination, which, having got wind in spite of the secrecy maintained, completed the demoralization of the troops, so that neither military pride nor the shame of disgracing themselves in the eyes of their enemies, had any effect in restraining them. The queen, who had come to the camp as to a brilliant pageant, departed the first day; and the engines and artificers were conveyed across the strait with some degree of

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 50. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 14. These state the attack on the Archbishop's palace to have taken place before the general assault; but I have thought it best to follow Neocastro, who in this matter could have no inducement to swerve from the truth. Montaner, in ch. 64, mentions a brilliant sortie of the "almugaveri" sent by the king. Perhaps it may be this one, and he may pass over in silence the valour of the Messinese, as Neocastro does that of the auxiliaries.

order and discipline; but when once the king had embarked, during the two succeeding days all the rest of the troops pressed down to obtain a passage with such hurry and confusion, and such forgetfulness of themselves and their property, as to give this retreat all the appearance of a precipitate flight. The vessels hastening backwards and forwards across the Straits, the crowds collecting round them, the curses bestowed on the rapacious sailors and their exorbitant demands, horses turned loose or killed by their owners, baggage, clothes, casks of wine, wood for the construction of machinery, grain and victuals heaped on the ground and half burnt in the confusion, scattered through the camp or along the shore as chance might direct, gave evidence of the present condition of that once flourishing army. During the retreat they were harassed by the impetuous sallies of the citizens; so that they threw up a redoubt, in all haste, to protect the embarkation, which they garrisoned with a strong party of horse, under the Duke of Burgundy; notwithstanding which, five hundred men were slain, and

<sup>1</sup> On the 26th of September, according to the statement of Neocastro, confirmed by a diploma of Charles.

a vast amount of plunder carried back to the city.<sup>1</sup> Amongst it was the great banner of the municipality of Florence, ill defended or abandoned in the headlong flight, which was hung up as a votive offering in the principal church of Messina.<sup>2</sup>

Such was the memorable result of the siege of Messina. Among the childish but parricidal divisions which caused the fall of Sicily bleeding and enslaved, the glory of her two chief cities shines forth conspicuous in the revolution of the Vespers, of which Palermo first raised the standard carrying the whole of Sicily with her; while Messina saved it by her heroic defence, when the yet unconsolidated state was menaced by so formidable a host. Hence the celebrity bestowed by fame on the captain, the citizens, and the women of Messina; hence the courage and beauty of the latter were the theme of the

<sup>1</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 50. Nic. Speciale, book i. ch. 17. Anon. Chron. Sic. ch. 41. Saba Malaspina, Cont. pp. 383, 384. D'Esclot, ch. 94. Montaner, ch. 65, 66. Pao. di Pietro, in Muratori, R. I. S. Agg. vol. xxvi. p. 8. Giachetto Malespini, ch. 212. Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 75. Chron. of the Conspiracy of Procida, p. 273. These writers differ a little as to the particulars of the retreat.

<sup>2</sup> Gio. Villani, book vii. ch. 64.



reviving muse of Italy ; hence the other Sicilian maids and matrons sought, as is the wont of admiration, to imitate them in the luxury of their dress and ornaments ; for, the peril past, the former delicate living was resumed amid the commerce, industry, and wealth of the valiant city.<sup>1</sup> The only foreigners who fought with her sons in the siege were sixty Spaniards ; there were also about a hundred Genoese, Venetians, Anconitans, and Pisans.<sup>2</sup> Beyond these they had neither citizens inured to arms before the siege, nor fortifications but such as were ruinous and disconnected,<sup>3</sup> so that in many places it was necessary to supply their deficiencies with palisades ; and many attacks were repulsed with scarcely any advantage of position. It is true that in those days the art of sieges was very different to what it is now, and less hard for the besieged to withstand, and that the militias of former times were less disciplined and compact than our standing armies ; but whatever was known in

<sup>1</sup> Nic. Speciale, book i, ch. 15.

<sup>2</sup> Bart. de Neocastro, ch. 50.

<sup>3</sup> Montaner, ch. 43, says that Messina was not then walled round, which is shown also by the other facts recorded at the beginning of Chap. VII.

those warlike days of the science of warfare had been exercised from his childhood, amid the carnage of the battle-field, by the conqueror of Manfred ; his captains were experienced, and fierce the courage of the transalpine adventurers ; while the Italian soldiers of those days were neither inexpert nor deficient in courage. Obedient and well disciplined, and provided with all the engines of war, they amounted, at the beginning of the siege, to near sixty thousand ; while all the inhabitants of the city, of every sex and age, from infancy to decrepitude, perhaps scarcely reached that number. For sixtyfour days it was besieged by this mighty host, which came covering the sea in its pride, and returned broken, mutilated, loaded with contumely, and scarcely to be restrained from precipitate flight. Some may say, that both in the siege of the city and in the plan of the campaign against the island, Charles committed many errors : but even granting this, it is not to be supposed that they were very egregious, or that he was incapable of repairing them ; and it is certain that he made numerous attacks upon the city with all his naval and military forces, which failed solely owing to the valour of the citi-

zens. To this, then, be the honour of the victory ascribed; and to the triumph of Messina, to the obstacles offered by the sea and by the mountains, to the courage of the rest of the Sicilians, and to the forces at length concentrated by the renown and ability of Peter, be it attributed that the remainder of the island suffered no further injury from a warlike array of such imposing magnitude, impelled by the first ardour of revenge.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See the judgment passed by Montaner, ch. 66, 71, upon the military operations of Charles. I have not followed him in every particular, because he is full of national prejudice; but the conclusion to which he comes is worthy of note, namely: that Charles conducted himself with great wisdom, and that he could not do otherwise. Montaner was himself an experienced "condottiero," and his Chronicle is full of military precepts, which are not, I think, to be despised.



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